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PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 052 December 2011

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 52 (December 2011)

BREAKING VITA NEWS

REVIEWED
Rage
Dark Souls
NBA 2K12
Child of Eden

ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS

The epic details revealed

+

DEPT. OF X-RAY GLASSES
PlayStation's Visionary Devs P. 60

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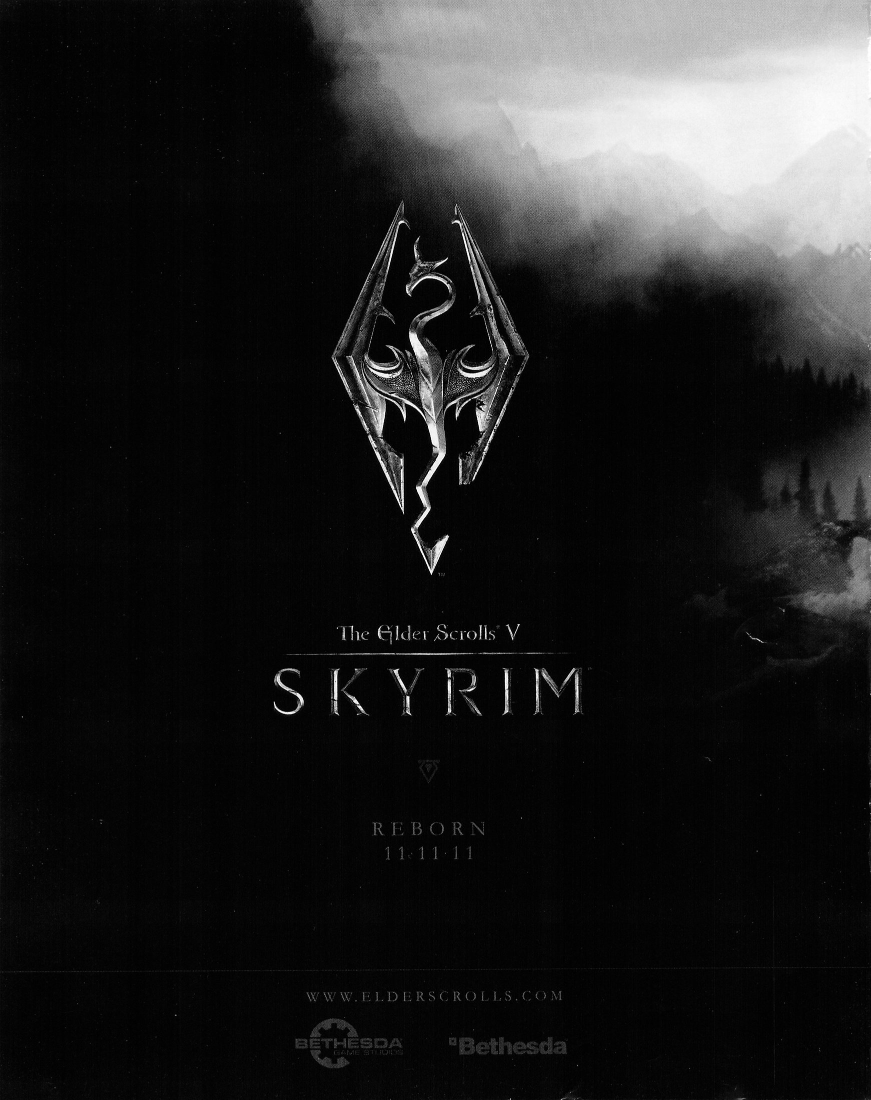

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Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Use of Alcohol

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The Official Magazine
DECEMBER 2011

COVER FEATURE

50 ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS

The lives of three assassins collide in the conclusion of Ezio Auditore's story. We reveal all from our hands-on time with the game at Ubisoft Montreal.

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Meet the brightest creative minds in the industry and find out what they're working on.

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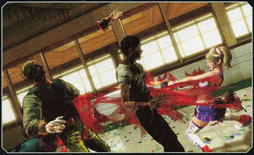

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30 **ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM**
Brawling, exploring, and mischief, oh my. We got an exclusive hands-on look at the latest *Elder Scrolls* title and barely scratched the surface of its massive new world.

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WAR!

What is it good for? Absolutely nothing.

As I write this month's Ed Note, a flame war is occurring on the PlayStation Blog story that reveals PTOM's November issue cover. *Battlefield 3* fans are outraged that *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* garnered a cover, and *MW3* fans are insulted that *BF3* fans think their game is even worthy of comparison. Accusations of idiocy, sellout, and even treason are rampant, and I've lost track of which side is actually winning. The only thing that seems clear cut is that everyone—at least on the Internet—seems to hate Activision. But I'll leave it to Activision's social media manager @OneOfSwords to deal with that issue. (Good luck with that, Dan!)

The amazing thing to me is that so much of this vitriol has so little to do with the games themselves. Neither *MW3* nor *BF3* has been released yet so it's impossible to have any factual discussion regarding their respective merits. The meat of this flame war seems to revolve around the perceived greed of publishers, some notion of console platform favoritism, and the perception that *MW3* will offer nothing in the way of innovation. If anything, these are the very side issues we need to eliminate from the conversation when the time comes to evaluate these two powerhouse franchises.

I've yet to have significant hands-on time with either game, but I'm excited by the notion of *MW3's* cinematic set pieces in some of the world's major cities, and *BF3's* attempts to bring new levels of realism and immersion to the franchise (and there's freakin' jets in it!) When the time comes for PTOM to review these magnificent new offerings, I want our minds clear of everything except the work of some of the industry's best development teams. I have a feeling it's not going to be an easy task to determine the "better" game.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor
twitter.com/RogerPTOM

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
twitter.com/ArtKenPTOM

Ken Bousquet is not a man to be trifled with. Go ahead and try, though. He'll turn those trifles into a delicious bouillabaisse and serve it with a side of "Don't f–k with me."

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
twitter.com/ScottPTOM

Scott Butterworth will tell you what he wants, what he really, really wants. But first, he has to get that Spice Girls song out of his head… with a hammer.

Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/RyanTaljonick

When we told Ryan Taljonick to kill two birds with one stone, we had no idea he would take it so literally. Twenty birds later, he seems to have mastered the art.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

We started to worry when Anne Lewis mentioned raising badgers like her children and then disappeared. We're pretty sure she'll turn up eventually.

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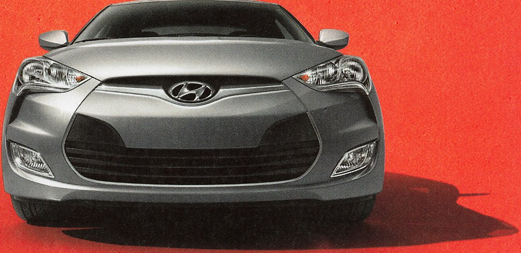

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Inside Qore Episode 43

Encore: Back for More

Final Fantasy XIII felt like such a peak for the series its developers couldn't leave it alone, coming back to tell a sequel in *Final Fantasy XIII-2*. We interviewed the game's key creators for their secrets on the neon world. In another bright setting, *SSX* pushes snowboarding to its helicopter-jumping, free-falling extreme, and we step into its bindings. *The Darkness II* mixes a comic-book world with crazy gameplay; you can wield four weapons at once, including your two demon-headed arms. And *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* crams a massive RPG world into your PS3.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

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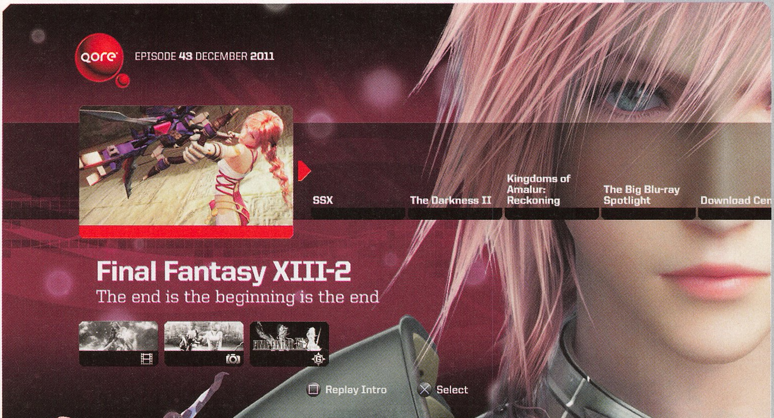
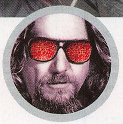

qore
EPISODE 43 DECEMBER 2011
SSX
The Darkness II
Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
The Big Blu-ray Spotlight
Download Cen
Final Fantasy XIII-2
The end is the beginning is the end
Replay Intro
Select

Final Fantasy XIII-2
Roman numerals FTW.

SSX
Coming down the mountain.

The Darkness II
Rage against the dying of the light.

Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
Role playing gets epic.



Blu-ray Spotlight
The Dude compels you to check out *The Big Lebowski*, finally on Blu-ray.

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

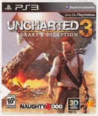
Fill up your life with our monthly guide

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY

NOV 01

Uncharted Waters
The PS3's most highly anticipated game, *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception,* arrives today!

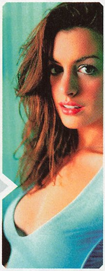
In Stores
Lord of the Rings: War in the North



04

Birth of the Morph-o-ray
The original PS2 *Ratchet & Clank* debuted this day in 2002, offering some of the most off-the-wall weapons we've ever seen.

PlayStation.2
Ratchet & Clank



08

Call to Arms
'Tis the season for series and *Modern Warfare 3* is claiming its spot on the list today.

In Stores
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

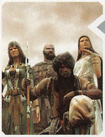
PS3
CALL OF DUTY MW3
ACTIVISION

11

Reach for the Sky...rim
Skyrim is out today and the first thing we're going to do is make a red-furred Khajit character and call him Ginger Ninja—because we can.

12

Pretty Kitty
Today is Anne Hathaway's birthday, which is cool, and an excuse to show a picture of the newest Catwoman.



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Requiescat en Pace
Ezio and Altair's stories come to a close in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations.*

In Stores
Saints Row: The Third, Need for Speed: The Run, Ultimate MvC3.

16

Party With Your Bear Day
We have no idea what this even means, but we plan on hangin' with our furry friends.

17

Ryan's Birthday
Today we celebrate our newest staffer's birthday, and by celebrate we mean ignore him and pretend we forgot.

19

Have a Bad Day Day
Why would this even exist? Who wakes up preparing for a bad day? Oh wait, we do. It eases our disappointment of thinking we're going to have good days.

22

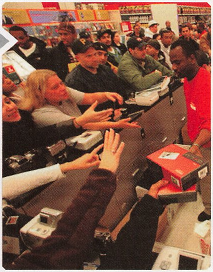
WWE-mania
WWE '12 arrives and picks up where the *SmackDown* series left off. We're leaning toward going with the Rock's special *People's Edition.*

24

Thanksgiving
Few holidays scream "America" more than one where we shove our faces full of food and pretend to be grateful for things.

25

Black Friday
Sure, Black Friday has a ton of great deals, but there are so many people. We prefer Cyber Monday because we're antisocial shut-ins.



28

Cyber Monday
The day we pretend to shop for gifts for loved ones, but we're really stocking up on stuff we want.

30

Happy B-day, Elisha
We're not sure what actress Elisha Cuthbert is up to these days, but we wish her the best on her special day.

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

HE RID THE WORLD OF AN EVIL ALIEN HORDE.
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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Tecmo Talk
Getting the gory details on Ninja Gaiden 3 from Yosuke Hayashi.
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The Comeback
Syndicate gets a reboot as a first-person shooter.
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Post Portal
Portal dev Kim Swift sits down to tell us about her new project.
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Lost and Found
Irrational Games discusses its abandoned RTS Dungeon Duels.
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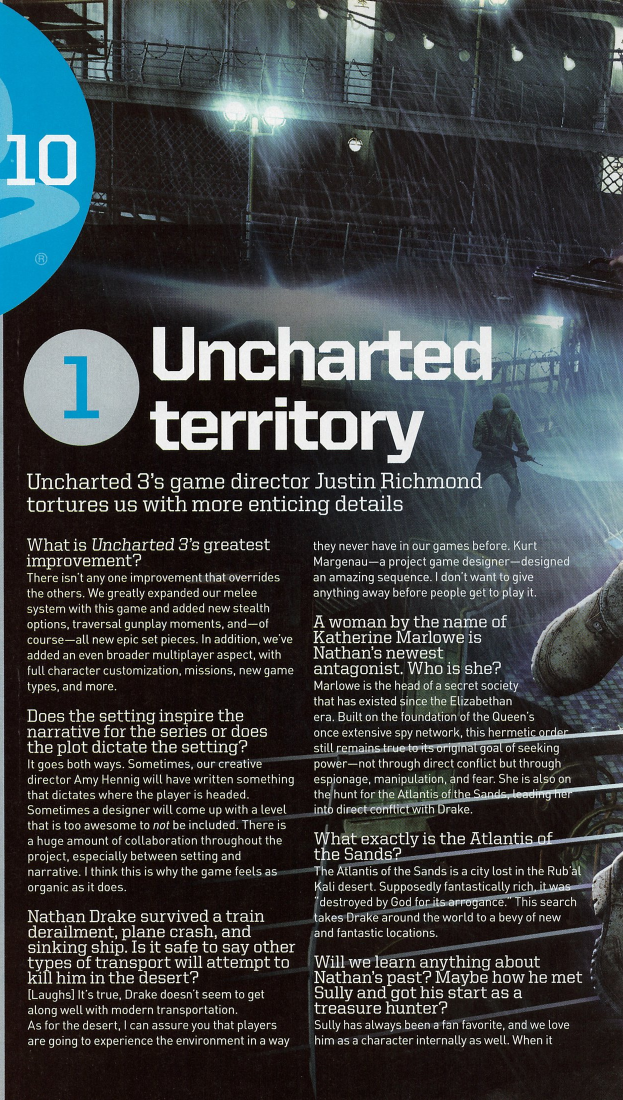
The Great Debate
PTOM editors go to war over Modern Warfare and Battlefield.
▸▸Page 28



1

Uncharted territory

Uncharted 3's game director Justin Richmond tortures us with more enticing details

What is *Uncharted 3's* greatest improvement?
There isn't any one improvement that overrides the others. We greatly expanded our melee system with this game and added new stealth options, traversal gunplay moments, and—of course—all new epic set pieces. In addition, we've added an even broader multiplayer aspect, with full character customization, missions, new game types, and more.

Does the setting inspire the narrative for the series or does the plot dictate the setting?
It goes both ways. Sometimes, our creative director Amy Hennig will have written something that dictates where the player is headed. Sometimes a designer will come up with a level that is too awesome to *not* be included. There is a huge amount of collaboration throughout the project, especially between setting and narrative. I think this is why the game feels as organic as it does.

Nathan Drake survived a train derailment, plane crash, and sinking ship. Is it safe to say other types of transport will attempt to kill him in the desert?
[Laughs] It's true, Drake doesn't seem to get along well with modern transportation.
As for the desert, I can assure you that players are going to experience the environment in a way they never have in our games before. Kurt Margenau—a project game designer—designed an amazing sequence. I don't want to give anything away before people get to play it.

A woman by the name of Katherine Marlowe is Nathan's newest antagonist. Who is she?
Marlowe is the head of a secret society that has existed since the Elizabethan era. Built on the foundation of the Queen's once extensive spy network, this hermetic order still remains true to its original goal of seeking power—not through direct conflict but through espionage, manipulation, and fear. She is also on the hunt for the Atlantis of the Sands, leading her into direct conflict with Drake.

What exactly is the Atlantis of the Sands?
The Atlantis of the Sands is a city lost in the Rub'al Kali desert. Supposedly fantastically rich, it was "destroyed by God for its arrogance." This search takes Drake around the world to a bevy of new and fantastic locations.

Will we learn anything about Nathan's past? Maybe how he met Sully and got his start as a treasure hunter?
Sully has always been a fan favorite, and we love him as a character internally as well. When it

came time to start working on *Uncharted 3*, we all wanted to go deeper into his relationship with Nathan. The term "bromance" came up more than a few times as we worked out the details. The player will know far more about Drake by the end of this game than they did at the beginning, I can assure you.

We couldn't help but notice Elena was wearing a wedding band in one of the trailers...

Drake and Elena have a complicated relationship, and that really comes out in this game. You're going to have to play and see.

What are some of the biggest multiplayer changes?

The biggest changes are the inclusion of multi-stage maps that function like the set pieces do in single player. In the Beta, we showed the cargo plane sequence where the players are fighting on trucks and a plane racing across a tarmac. We also have included splitscreen in multiplayer with dual PSN ID logins, so you and a friend can sit on the couch and play together while ranking up individually.

What behind-the-scenes work has been done to optimize *Uncharted*'s impressive animation?

Naughty Dog now has our own sound stage that we put to good use on this project. Because the stage is soundproof, we were able to capture both audio and motion at the same time, which resulted in some amazing performances out of the actors. It is more like shooting a movie or TV show than a game.

What about 3D support or PlayStation Home plans?

The game has full 3D support, and it looks amazing. As for PlayStation Home plans, rest assured that we have something in the hopper for our fans that like to explore Home.

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Intense Violence
Strong Language

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2 Flesh and bone

Cutting into the heart of *Ninja Gaiden 3* with Producer Yosuke Hayashi

Ninjas, gore, and brutally challenging combat—these are things we've come to expect from Team Ninja's flagship *Ninja Gaiden* franchise. Yet after a recent sit-down session with Yosuke Hyashi, *Ninja Gaiden 3's* lead producer, we got the chance to explore some of the game's new features that are sure to make it stand out from previous entries in the series.

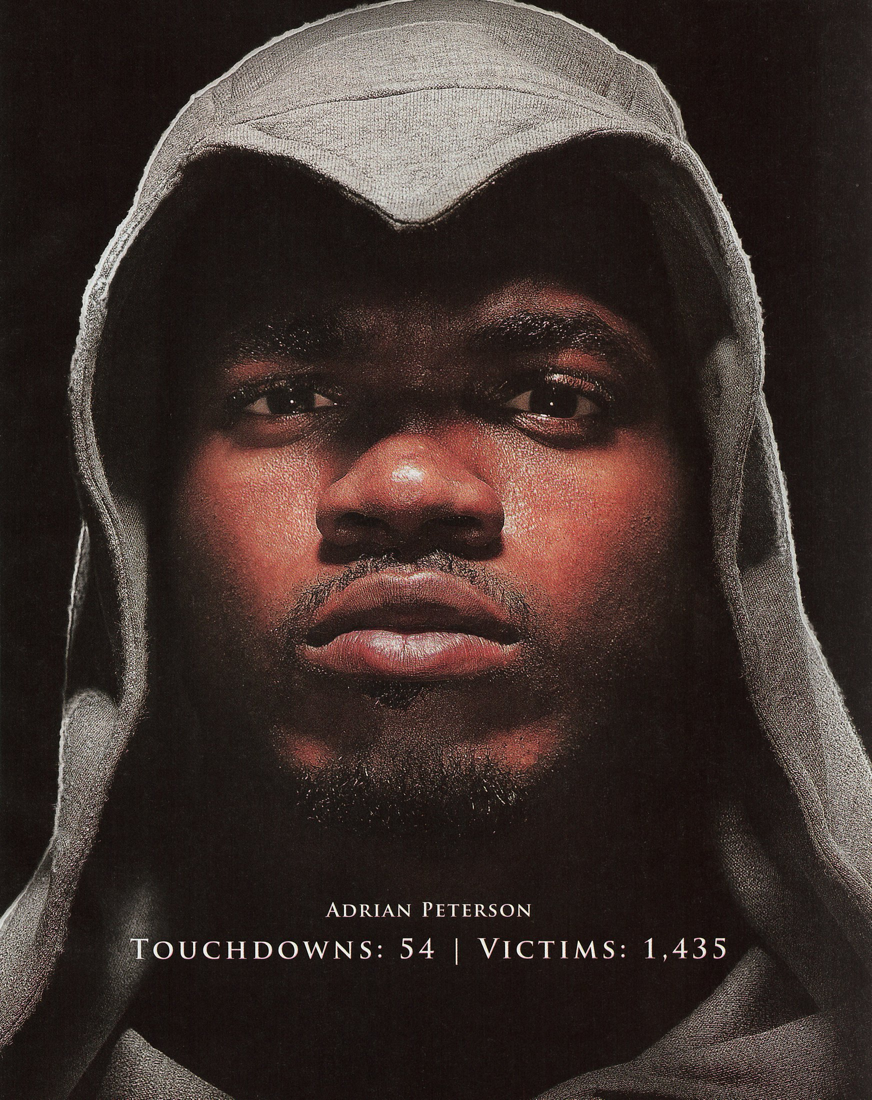
Perhaps the most shocking change is the multiplayer mode. Up to eight players can participate in both co-op and competitive gameplay. Though we don't have specifics on what each mode will entail, Hyashi hinted we might be able to challenge Ryu Hayabusa himself to become the world's greatest ninja.

For those more interested in *Ninja Gaiden 3's* single-player offering, the game will feature a new Hero mode difficulty intended for casual players. This mode provides less-experienced ninjas with automatic guarding and evasion assists, allowing us to progress through the game's story without fear of getting road blocked by the series' notorious difficulty. Yet there are still plenty of thrills to be had by hardcore fans in Ninja mode, which turns off all assists and lets us fully experience the series' legendary difficulty in all its glory.

Hayashi insists that the action will remain the core focus of the game, but this time around combat will be supplemented with an emotional story, penned by original *Ninja Gaiden* scribe Masato Kato. "The more Ryu kills, the more he suffers, so we wanted to move players' emotions in that sense," says Hayashi. Will these changes mesh with a franchise so embedded in pure carnage? We can't wait to find out come 2012.

Alive and Kicking

Ninja Gaiden isn't the only franchise Team Ninja has up its seasoned sleeves: the fifth installment of the *Dead or Alive* fighting franchise will also launch in 2012. Even in its pre-alpha state, the hard-hitting action looks fast and slick. Rounds take place amidst dynamic multi-tiered stages, and since the environments themselves add an element of danger, we'll have to keep our eyes on more than just our opponent. We're eager to step into the *DOA* universe once again (especially since we won't be playing volleyball this time).



ADRIAN PETERSON

TOUCHDOWNS: 54 | VICTIMS: 1,435

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

SONY
PS VITA
SELECT
START

3

Vitalogy

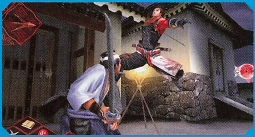
Five new games that have us itching to get our hands on PlayStation Vita

8cm
15cm
ココアサンド

Katamary Damacy no Vita

ETA Hardware Launch **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Namco Bandai

We hoped our favorite pint-sized Prince would someday return, but we didn't expect him this soon—and this time around, he's got some new tricks up his sleeve. In our hands-on demo with *Katamary Damacy no Vita*, we could use the Vita's touch controls to squish the katamari between skyscrapers, or stretch it to cover the width of a superhighway. Who knew being destructive could be so cute?



Shinobido 2: Tales of the Ninja

ETA TBD 2012 **Pub** Namco Bandai **Dev** Acquire

Fact: ninjas are badass. Especially when they're upset about being betrayed and left for dead. Yet even angry ninjas must rely on stealth more than in-your-face action. We ran along rooftops, dropping down to perform a huge variety of brutal stealth kills before returning to the shadows. When we were outnumbered, we could use the rear touchpad to throw objects in a first-person perspective to distract our enemies.

Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

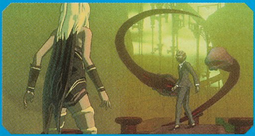
ETA Hardware Launch **Pub** Capcom **Dev** Capcom

As if we weren't excited enough for *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3's* release on PS3, we couldn't stop smiling at the thought of crushing our friends on PS Vita. Project producer Yoshinori Ono said *UMvC3* will be a launch title for Vita and will aim to connect players within its worldwide online community. Be warned: mutants look even sexier when enhanced by 60fps Organic LEDs.

Army Corps of Hell

ETA Hardware Launch **Pub** Square Enix **Dev** Entersphere

When the skeletal lord of demons loses a fight against the gods, he doesn't just sit around and endure his punishment. Instead, he amasses a black war machine of goblins to take them on again. We catapulted our goblin army—equipped with swords and spells—at enemy generals and watched as our foes were torn into bloody pieces. *Army Corps of Hell* is brutal, gory, and infused with Heavy Metal chaos.



Gravity Daze

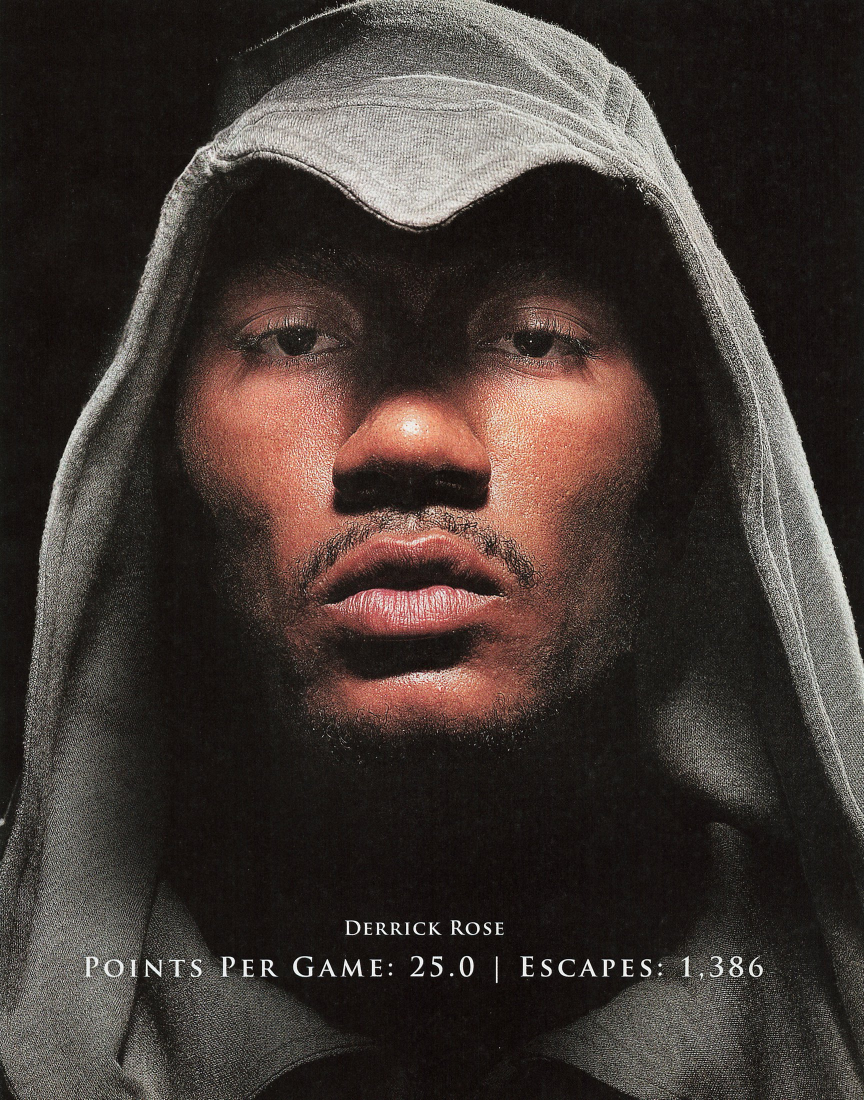
ETA Hardware Launch **Pub** SCEA **Dev** SCE Japan Studio

An amnesiac girl with a celestial cat is released from the bounds of gravity, free to walk on walls or soar through the air. Using Vita's touch capabilities, we could manipulate gravity to launch our heroine at enemies or traverse otherwise unreachable surfaces. With smooth controls and gorgeous cel-shaded visuals, *Gravity Daze* looks to be one of the most beautiful action games coming to Sony's new portable system.

Also Coming

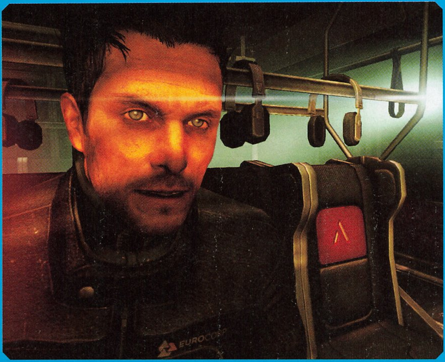
Many of the following titles are still unconfirmed for a North American release, but Vita development continues at a robust rate.

AR Combat DigiQ
Blazblue Continuum Shift Extend
Browser Sangokushi Touch Battle
Dark Quest Alliance
Disgaea 3: Absence of Detention
Dreamclub Zero Portable
Dynasty Warriors Next
Fish On
Hot Shots Golf
Little Bastards! Converted Edition
Little Deviants
Lord of Apocalypse
Mahjong Fight Club
Monster Radar
Ou to Maoh to Nananin no himegimi tachi: Shin Ousama monogatari
Power Smash 4
Project NOELS
Ragnarok Odyssey
Reality Fighters
Ridge Racer
Shin Kamaitachi no Yoru 11nin me no Suspect
Starstrike Delta
Street Fighter X Tekken
Sumioni
Super Monkey Ball
Tales of Innocence R
Ys


DERRICK ROSE
POINTS PER GAME: 25.0 | ESCAPES: 1,386

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Hey, you'd look a little crazy too if you had a bio-chip in your brain.

4

Original Syn

Classic tactics franchise Syndicate returns as a first-person shooter

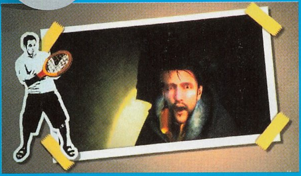
Following years of intense rumors and supposed leaks, Electronic Arts has finally confirmed what we'd already assumed: After 15 years, its classic cyberpunk-themed *Syndicate* franchise is making a comeback on PS3 early next year. And it looks almost nothing like the original PSone and PC entries that won over strategy fans in the mid-'90s.

While the earlier entries employed an isometric perspective and put players in charge of a four-man squad of cyborgs, the new *Syndicate* (developed by Starbreeze Studios, the folks behind *The Darkness* and *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena*) is a futuristic first-person shooter that bears more than a passing resemblance to *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

Much like that recent smash, *Syndicate* places a heavy emphasis on the merging of man and machine. In this case, hero Miles Kilo—an agent of Eurocorp, one of three rival corporations battling it out in a grim vision of 2069—can utilize the DART 6 bio-chip implanted in his head to access a variety of devastating hacking abilities. In addition to high-impact gunplay, Kilo can hack into enemies' weapons and turn them against their holders, which should lead to some explosively entertaining scenarios. In addition to the single-player campaign, the game also includes an additional standalone four-player co-op offering.

With a sleek, modern aesthetic that recalls *Mass Effect* and *Blade Runner*, *Syndicate* certainly strays from its tactical roots, but this promising reboot looks to be an early standout for 2012.

5



Mysterious Move

Enigmatic horror game Until Dawn aims to elevate Move

Sony hasn't officially announced *Until Dawn* yet, but we saw snippets of it as early as 2009—when it flickered for a few seconds in a PlayStation Move announcement video. The game is now in development at SCEA and is said to be a more serious take on the zombie genre than PSN game *Dead Nation*.

So what do we know now? Well, not much. The brief clips show characters moving through gloomy rooms by flashlight—which, apparently, is aimed using the Move controller—with a look of terror on their faces.

On the official PlayStation blog, one user expressed concern about whether the game would truly be a serious horror title, or something more flippant like *Dead Rising*. Happily, a member of the dev team responded with "You won't be disappointed." *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* made great use of motion controls on Nintendo's Wii, so the theory, at least, has been proven before.

In our view, this is exactly what Move needs. With few "proper" games and a slew of party minigames, the Move still feels like an optional extra than something vital to the gameplay experience. *Until Dawn* could change all that—if it makes tight, clever use of the motion control system.

ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS

LEAVE YOUR LEGACY

NOVEMBER 15

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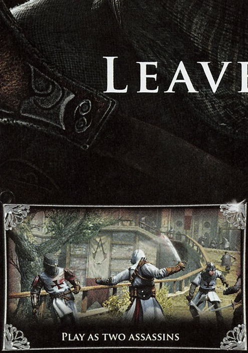
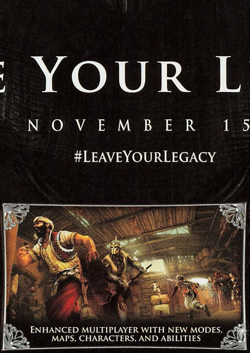
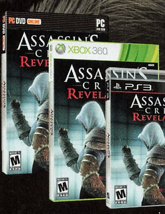


PLAY AS TWO ASSASSINS



ENHANCED MULTIPLAYER WITH NEW MODES, MAPS, CHARACTERS, AND ABILITIES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PC
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MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- Blood
- Language
- Mild Sexual Themes
- Violence

PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE

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6 Dark designs

Lead designer Tom Galt illuminates all the supernatural action that lurks in The Darkness II

How did Digital Extremes pick up where Starbreeze left off?

About two and a half years ago, 2K Games approached us and asked what we would want to do with *The Darkness* and where we would want to take it. We played through the first game, got to know the franchise a bit more, read a load of the comics and pitched 2K some of our ideas. They loved it, so here we are.

Is it daunting stepping into Starbreeze's shoes?

One of the first things we did was bring in Paul Jenkins. He wrote the first game and a lot of the comics, so that created some continuity for us. We looked at the first game as an origin tale for Jackie, and the new story takes what Starbreeze did and runs with it. It's the same with the gameplay, to some extent. A lot of things, such as the Demon Arm, the Black Hole, and the Darklings, are from Starbreeze. We've taken those and put our own spin on them.

But there was more to the first game than tentacle arms and sweary little Darklings, right?

Yeah. What was really important in the first game was character interaction—that emotional connection you have with Jackie and the people in his life. Getting those moments and building on them was key for us. We spent a lot of time developing these scenes and that's probably been the most challenging thing. On the flipside, we're upping the pace and making the light-versus-dark gameplay more impactful. We wanted to make sure dealing with light was important *during* combat. It forces you to make decisions about how you're going to use your different powers in the middle of a fight.

Is the games industry catering to mature gamers with the emotional content like that in *The Darkness*?

Absolutely. Mature people want more story and character interaction in their games, and I think that's happening. It's certainly what we're trying to do—create something with that visceral action element to it but also the emotional link and the intelligence, where you can talk about the characters and events in the game not just the parts where you're blowing everyone away.

Is it hard matching the emotional moments to a more action-centric game?

It's not easy. In any game, making those emotional connections is difficult. You have to spend time developing the connection between the player and characters, but people might not buy an action game for that, so you have to be smart with how you do it.

We keep asking about Starbreeze's game, but it casts quite a shadow... if you'll excuse the joke.

What's challenging is that you already have these mechanics and characters and have to create new ideas while making sure they work with the series. You need to do a lot of research and planning to figure out what the magic and key aspects of the original game were about.

> "Making emotional connections is difficult."

What innovation would help you make games better?

Procedural art. It takes a long time to create the high-quality models, normal mapping, shading and lighting, put them in the environment and light them well. If we had procedural art, that would be awesome. We've almost hit that point where it's going to be impossible to make games in two-year cycles. Next generation there are going to be graphical improvements, of course, but we're going to see a lot more boosts to sound systems, real-time lighting, particle systems, and A.I.

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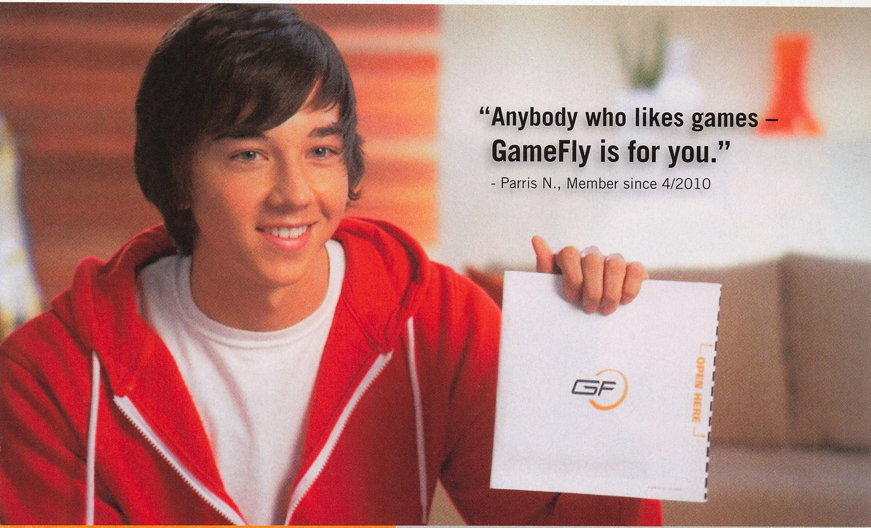
Games Delivered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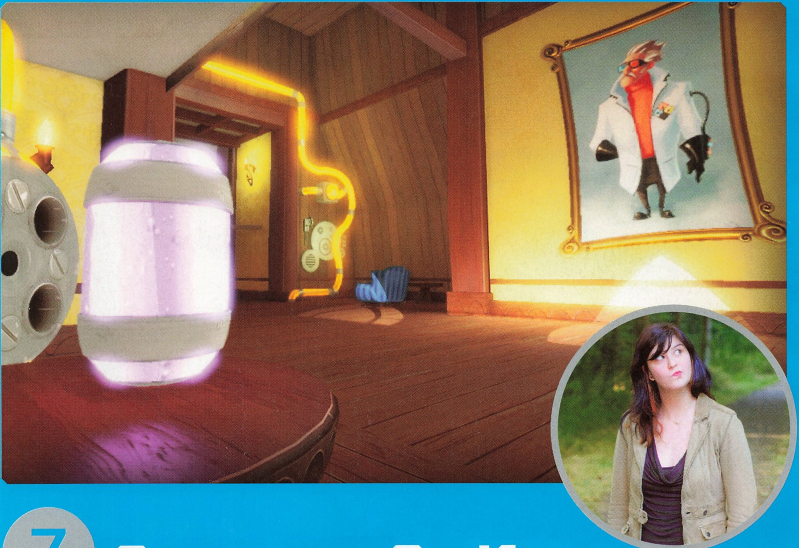


7 Quantum Swift

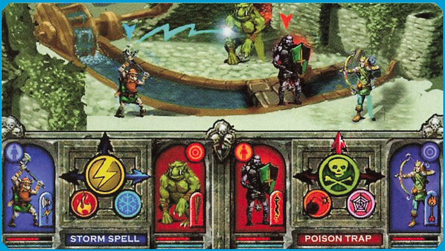
An inside look at the next puzzler from Portal mastermind Kim Swift

How do you follow up a massive critical and commercial success like 2007's *Portal*? According to Airtight Game's Kim Swift, lead designer on the classic puzzle title, you do it by sticking to what you love. "I really like making first-person platform puzzle games,"says Swift. "They're a lot of fun to play, and I like making games I want to play."

Swift's new title, *Quantum Conundrum*, certainly bears a striking resemblance to *Portal*, and not just because it's also a first-person puzzle platformer. We once again find ourselves in a vast laboratory and must figure out how to get through a series of rooms using an array of scientific devices. There's no evil robot mastermind here, though, just the mad genius Professor Quadwrangle who's disappeared as a result of a failed experiment. As his nephew, we'll scour his bizarre mansion in an attempt to find him.

This time around, however, we'll be thinking with dimensions instead of portals. Each of the game's four different dimensions (five, if you include regular ol' Earth gravity) possess a particular set of physics that can be engaged or disengaged on the fly to solve puzzles. Demonstrating the "fluffy" dimension, Swift showed us how we could suddenly pick up and move items that we normally couldn't lift (chairs, for example, were too heavy because we're, in her words, "a sissy"). This allowed us to hop up onto ledges and press switches. To get across a long, bottomless pit, she threw a safe, flipped on the slow motion dimension, jumped on the now slowly flying safe, then quickly flipped the reverse gravity dimension off and on to float in a wave across the divide—proving, as Swift pointed out, "You can, in fact, switch between all four dimensions dynamically."

"We're all a little weird, and that comes out in our games," Swift explained. "I want our games to be games, not resemble reality in any way. I want them to be fun." It's that line of thinking that made *Portal* so damned charming, and *Quantum Conundrum* looks to be following suit. We can't wait to get solving come 2012.



With cards, monsters, dungeons, and magic, it's hard to see what went wrong.

8 Lost in time

Irrational Games reveals an abandoned project from its development vault

The game development process is a grueling one. For every game that sees the light of day, several concepts are axed. Such is the fate of *Dungeon Duel*, an RPG/RTS hybrid from *BioShock* creator Irrational Games that was abandoned to the annals of history. According to Irrational's documentation, *Dungeon Duel* was in development back in 2002. The game was designed as a fast-paced real-time strategy title built specifically for consoles and was infused with a trading card element.

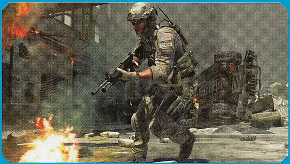
"Decks" of cards represented a player's character, items, and spells. Upon entering randomly generated dungeons, these cards sprang to life, allowing players to place their creatures and explore while avoiding deadly traps and enemies. Combat was a rock-paper-scissors affair: enemies would be aligned with one of four elements, each with specific strengths and weaknesses.

Perhaps *Dungeon Duel's* most interesting feature was its unique trading system. As players progressed through the game, they could obtain rare cards for powerful characters or equipment. These cards could be traded with others to build out stronger decks. Additionally, cards could be combined to create entirely new magic items, spells, and creatures.

We can't help but feel a bit disappointed that *Dungeon Duel* never came to fruition. Though unlikely, perhaps we'll someday see it on PSN—after all, it *does* exist.

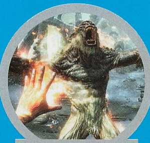
9 The Readers' Most Wanted

This makes six months that *Modern Warfare 3* has held the number one spot, and we are still completely at a loss as to why *BioShock Infinite* still doesn't appear on this list. *Skyrim* has popped up again after a month of absence, and the release of several previous rankers has left room for *Max Payne 3* and *Mass Effect 3*, both of which have made our Most Wanted list previously.



01 *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*
02 *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*
03 *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*
04 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
05 *Final Fantasy XIV Online*
06 *Twisted Metal*
07 *Batman: Arkham City*
08 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
09 *DmC: Devil May Cry*
10 *Battlefield 3*
11 *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection*
12 *Silent Hill HD Collection*
13 *SoulCalibur V*
14 *Need for Speed: The Run*
15 *Max Payne 3*
16 *Mass Effect 3*
17 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
18 *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3*
19 *GoldenEye 007: Reloaded*
20 *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*

UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was September 4, 2011 to September 17, 2011.

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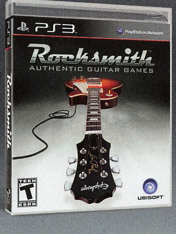
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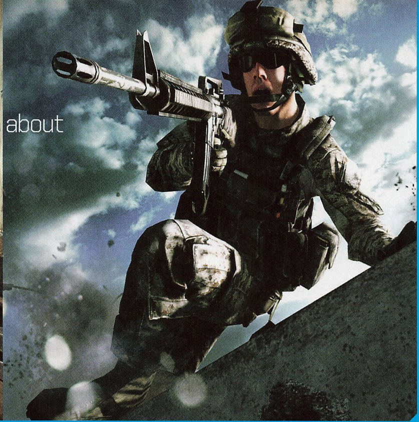


10 Will Modern Warfare 3 outgun Battlefield 3?

PTOM editors wage war over the two hottest military shooters

Yes

Says the thrill-seeking peacenik

Scott Butterworth

Look, I'm not saying *Call of Duty* is "better" than *Battlefield*. How could anyone make such a grandiose claim about something so subjective? The two franchises cater to different tastes and are fully capable of coexisting without some idiotic flame war. That said, I know which game I'll be buying first this holiday season. (Hint: It's *Modern Warfare 3*.)

Why? Because the *Call of Duty* games—and the *Modern Warfare* branch in particular—are arguably the most well-made shooters ever created. Just look at the original *Modern Warfare*: nearly every shooter since has emulated its flawless controls, and the peerless graphics are still light-years beyond most competitors. Most importantly, the overwhelming sense of urgency that every single mission manages to convey makes the game a breathtaking thrill ride from start to finish. And personally, that's all I want: a thrill ride. I don't know a thing about real-world military anything, and I don't care. I don't actually want to join the army; I just want to be a war hero.

And then there's multiplayer. That's all I should have to say, really. Every other game's just been playing catch up ever since *Modern Warfare* blew the doors off the genre back in 2007, *Battlefield* included. Perhaps *Battlefield 3* will finally tip the scale in favor of the *Battlefield* franchise, but for now, I'm sticking by *COD*.

No

Says the realistic military man

Ryan Taljonick

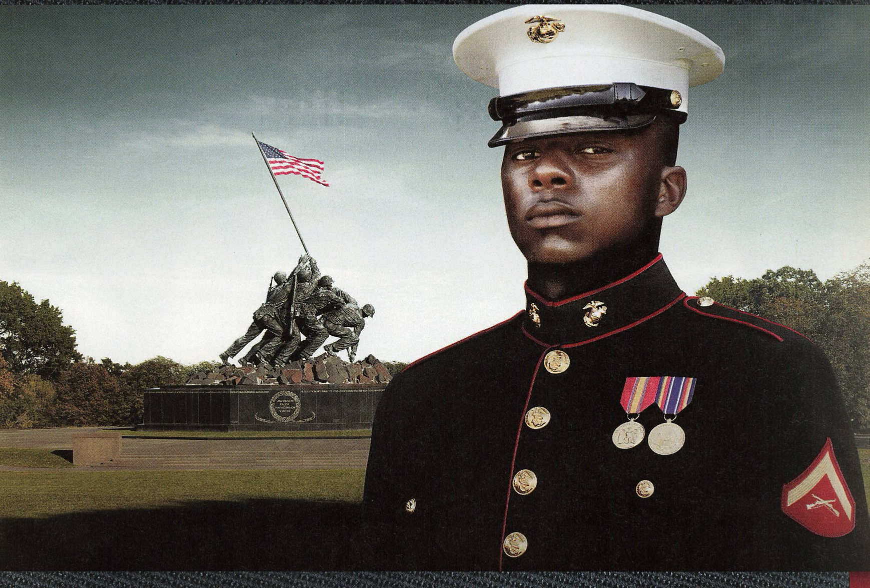
Dear Scott: Have fun unlocking Prestige level 32. I hope you enjoy turning your targeting reticle into a cute little heart and dropping so many care packages that your teammates mistake you for a gun-toting Santa Claus. But while you're customizing your weapons with duct tape and spray paint, I'll be piloting a UH-60 Blackhawk with a team of ass-kicking soldiers in tow. Maybe I'll circle around our enemy's base while my passengers rain death from above via two 7.62 mm M134 miniguns. Or maybe they'll parachute behind enemy lines, choosing to stealthily introduce bad guys to the sharp end of a combat knife. I can't pilot an RC-XD Explosive RC Car, though. Got me there.

See, what I love about the *Battlefield* series is its unmatched realism. Snipers have to account for bullet drop when taking long-ranged pot shots; nearby explosions deafen hearing; I can level *an entire building* when enemy forces are holed up inside. Can I wrap my M16 in Tiger Stripe camouflage? Nope—but my M16 in *Battlefield* has a heft that it lacks in *Call of Duty*. I can drive tanks. I can destroy tanks. I can score points by restocking my team's ammo supply or reviving them with defibrillators.

There's no question that *Call of Duty* is a worthwhile franchise, but you can keep your game-ending killstreaks. I'll take gut-wrenching action over that any day.

THERE IS NO EASY WAY IN.

WHICH IS WHY ONCE YOU'RE A MARINE, YOU'RE ALWAYS A MARINE.



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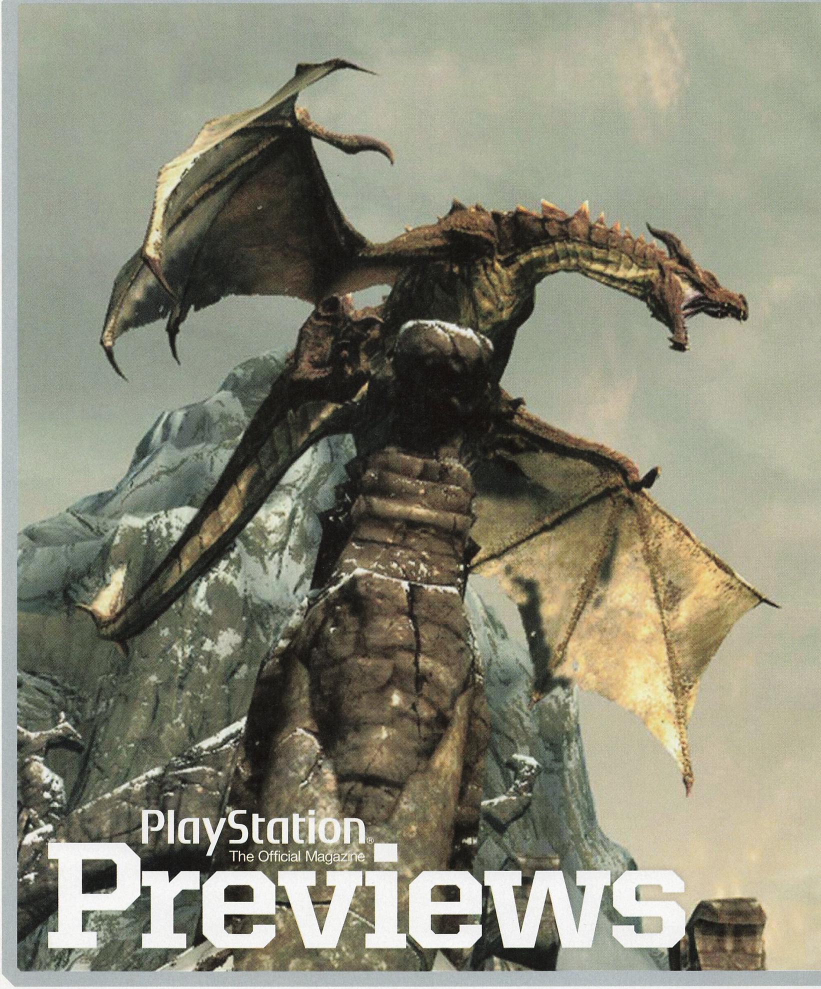

PlayStation®
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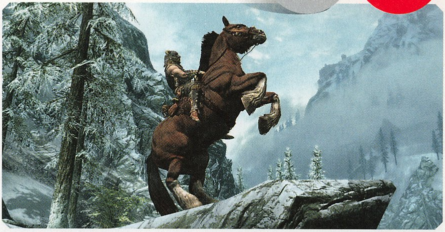
Previews

Quick Pitch

Exploration
Skyrim's vast open world offers a wide array of wilderness to explore and discover.

Creation
Building and customizing a character is one of *Skyrim's* great perks.

Adventure
Set 200 years after *Oblivion*, the game occurs during a raging civil war.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **Bethesda Game Studios**

The Elder Scrolls V

Skyrim

WORLD EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON
PlayStation The Official Magazine

An hour of wandering in wonderment

We're not going to act like playing one of the year's most anticipated games is some sort of cruel punishment, but it doesn't seem fair to tease us with one of the largest, most awe-inspiring fantasy worlds ever conceived only to pull the controller back after one measly hour. It's impossible to get even a modest sense of what a game like *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* has to offer within just 60 minutes, but when presented with the opportunity, we did what came naturally in the face of a new open-world experience: wandered aimlessly.

The demo began about 30 minutes into the game—skipping the narrative introduction moments to keep story details under wraps—and after tweaking and customizing various elements of our hero's looks and attributes, we found ourselves running through gorgeous vistas filled with seemingly endless trees, shrubs, butterflies, and all else that nature has to offer. Even from our brief moments with the game, it's clear that *Skyrim* offers a level of ethereal beauty unlike anything in recent memory.

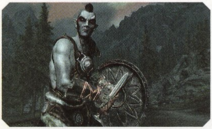
Through the Woods

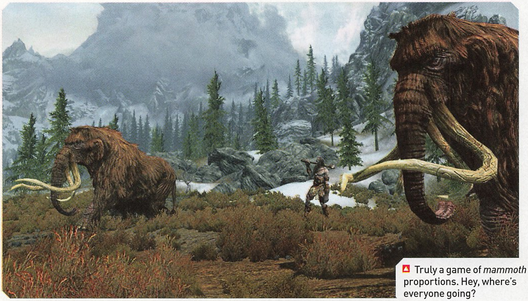
As we sauntered up to a guard protecting a cave entrance, he charged toward our character, menacing axe in hand. And suddenly we realized that amidst all the sightseeing, we'd handily forgotten to equip weapons and armor. Luckily, with but a moment in the menus, we were swinging a burly sword at anyone that crossed our path. Soon cave-dwelling warriors brandishing fiery arrows fell in our wake, as we swapped to the third-person camera to watch each gritty, violent attack unfold in full view.

Once we returned to the woods, however, we opted to hunt down a nearby deer, a move that yielded

▸▸

△ The variety of potential characters is absolutely staggering. Want to be a Goblin with a mace? Great! Want to be a human male with a giant hammer? No problem! The hardest part is deciding.





△ Truly a game of *mammoth* proportions. Hey, where's everyone going?

unexpected results. It turns out that the deer's pelt and meat both serve important purposes in the world of *Skyrim*, as the game's lead artist Matt Carofano shared with us. Pelts can be collected and turned into leather on heating racks, then used at blacksmith forges to create unique weapons and armor. And while the venison can be eaten raw, taking the time to cook it in a pot creates a much more healing meal. Essentially, players who invest themselves in the various minor aspects of the experience may yield significant rewards across the adventure.

> Skyrim offers a level of ethereal beauty unlike anything in recent memory.

Night Rider

With time running down on the clock, we slipped into our old *Grand Theft Auto* routine and decided to cause a little mischief. In *Skyrim*, this can mean something as subtle and lightly satisfying as meddling with relationships—like befriending two opposing suitors and then selling each out to his rival instead of helping match them up with a favored young lady. *Skyrim's* deep conversational branches offer an opportunity to impact the lives of even the most inessential characters in the world, which can easily be used for good and bad alike.

But we also took the opportunity to steal some sweet alcoholic nectar from a meadery, unintentionally tipping off a clerk during the process. Regrettably, we were forced to brandish our sword in his (now former) place of employment.

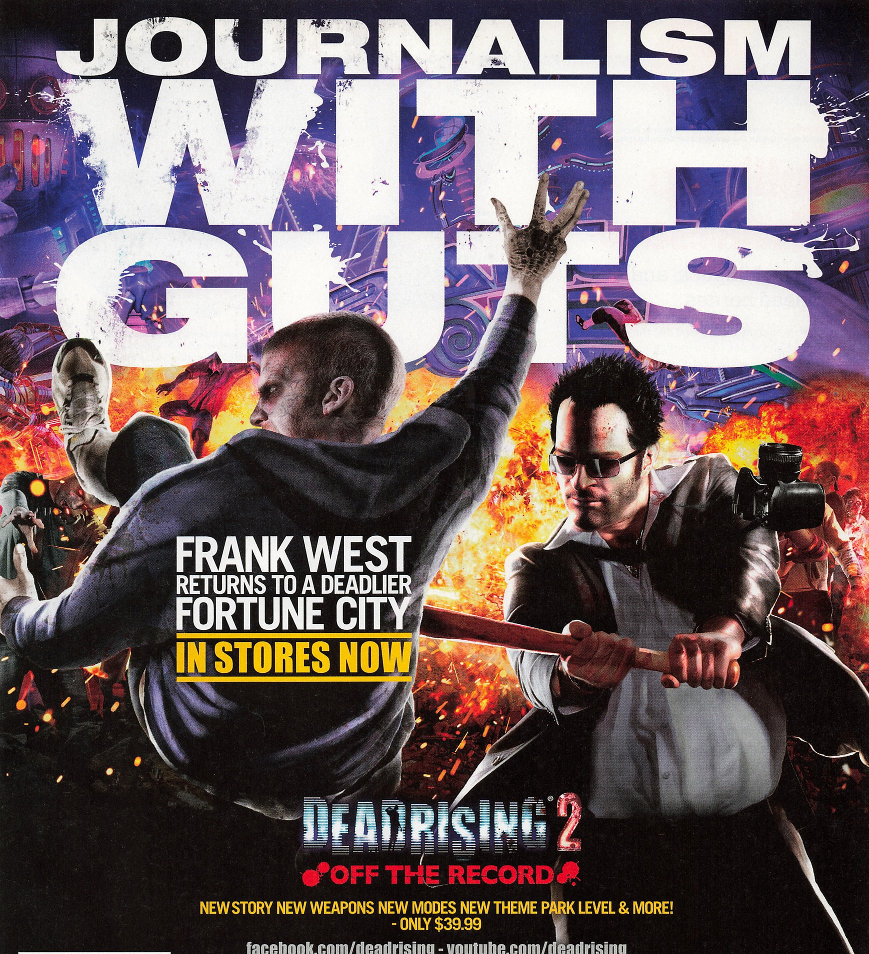
Finally, as we bid adieu to the brief demo, we nabbed a horse from a barn in the middle of the night, riding away into darkness as the owner feebly took chase. Believe us, it's much more satisfying than snagging some generic sports car.

As we galloped on toward the sunrise, it dawned on us that *Skyrim's* vast world of options offers a bold level of interactivity that seems meatier than anything we've tackled before—where common acts like combat, theft, and conversation are joined by a universe of other minor decisions that can significantly shape the journey. In essence, it's a place that we can see ourselves inhabiting and thriving in for quite some time. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

Dev Talk

"If you do some crime in one of [*Skyrim's* nine counties], you aren't wanted in another. They don't know about it and they don't care. So you can do a lot of crime over here, and then travel to another city and you're okay."

Matt Carofano
Lead Artist



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HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Studios** Dev **Grasshopper Manufacture**

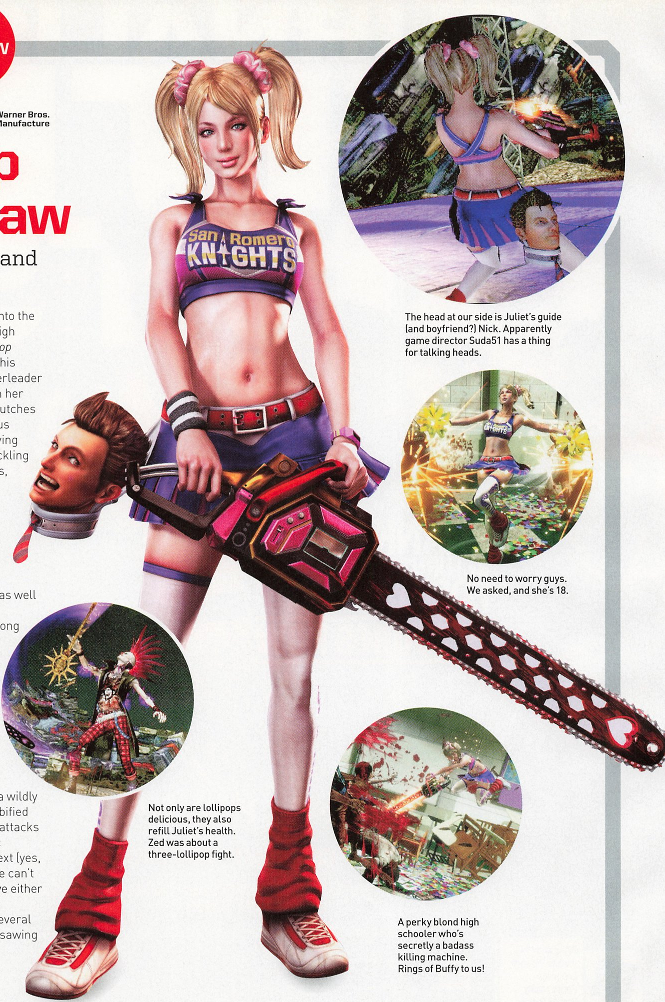
Lollipop Chainsaw

Glitter, lollipops, and undead hordes

As soon as we stepped into the halls of San Romero High School, we knew *Lollipop Chainsaw* was made for us. In this zombie action game, sexy cheerleader Juliet Starling fights to reclaim her former high school from the clutches of the undead. Our demo lead us through the school, where slaying zombie after zombie left us cackling with manic glee as glitter, coins, and stars poured out of decimated corpses.

Armed with pompoms for wider-range attacks and a chainsaw for more devastating and focused heavy attacks, Juliet must cleanse the school of brain-hungry monstrosities as well as the outlandish bosses and mini-bosses she encounters along the way. We ran into one such mini-boss—Juliet's former teacher—but after decapitating some zombie students, we built up enough Stars to fill our meter and unleash a wave of powerful attacks, brutally transforming the former instructor into a pile of glittery goop.

Later we were dropped into a wildly over-the-top fight against zombified punk rocker Zed, whose quick attacks are as damaging as his caustic language. Wonderfully crass text (yes, actual physical words which we can't re-print) flew toward us, and we either dodged or pompomed our way through. After sucking down several life-saving lollipops (and chainsawing Zed in half a couple times), he finally went down, leaving us craving more. **ANNE LEWIS**



The head at our side is Juliet's guide (and boyfriend?) Nick. Apparently game director Suda51 has a thing for talking heads.

No need to worry guys. We asked, and she's 18.

Not only are lollipops delicious, they also refill Juliet's health. Zed was about a three-lollipop fight.

A perky blond high schooler who's secretly a badass killing machine. Rings of Buffy to us!

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Language
Violence

NAUGHTY DOG

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UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **April 2012** Pub **Activision** Dev **Radical Entertainment**

Prototype 2

Ironic name, killer game

Nobody understands the original *Prototype's* flaws like Radical Entertainment. The developer is open about what didn't work—the look, the story, and most of the mission design, for starters. *Prototype 2* essentially starts over from scratch by reinforcing what worked in the first place while abandoning everything that didn't.

James Heller replaces Alex Mercer as our main character. Radical wants Heller to be relatable, unlike *Prototype's* sociopathic anti-hero. He also has human motives for his vendetta against Mercer. Innocents in the quarantined "Yellow Zone" of a virus-infected New York City aren't targets like they used to be—they're sad and struggling to survive, just like James.

The difference is, Heller has enemies who know his face, so he isn't safe anywhere. Using his abilities to transform into other characters is essential to avoiding attention, especially when stealthily exploring restricted zones to cause chaos. Since Heller actually has goals and objectives, he's more than a vehicle for violence—although we love the idea of infiltrating a base as a scientist and unleashing monstrous test subjects on our enemies.

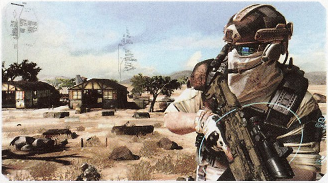
What stands out most (aside from the colorful new visual palette) is that *Prototype 2* exhibits structure and purpose, which is exactly what the previous game lacked. Its tone is sympathetic but still vicious, giving Heller more to do than fight...if he wants. The dialed-back pace and more focused direction could reformulate the messy original into an engrossing, empowering sequel. **MITCH DYER**

▲ Heller's multi-faceted arms offer numerous inventive ways to dispatch enemies and come in quite handy when shaving.

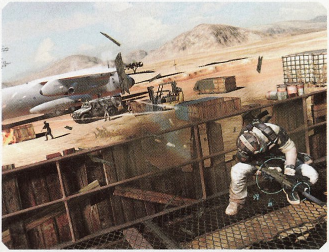
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Q1 2012** Dev **Ubisoft** Pub **Ubisoft Paris**

Ghost Recon
Future Soldier

What the future should look like



▲ Slick digital overlays—like the ring around each soldier's gun—replace the usual HUD displays and objective information.



We're creeping up the road slowly enough that our sniper's camouflage comes into effect. He fades into nothingness, invisible and on the move, hiding in plain sight. Suddenly, an enemy heat signature flickers into view 100 yards away—someone on our team saw and identified him. We ignore the easy kill. Action is tempting in *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*, but patience is essential.

The competitive multiplayer in *Future Soldier* isn't like other online shooters. Our mission as attackers is to push through and destroy a series of control points, much like *Battlefield 3's* Rush mode. Though this is far more methodical than waves of spawned soldiers smashing into each other. Our movement has to be thoughtful, which breeds a slower ebb and flow than we're used to. The gunplay is exciting, but the tense build up to each firefight makes them memorable.

Resisting the urge to stray from our objective to score an easy kill is a common struggle. Avoiding violence seems antithetical to personal progression, sure, but we have a mission here that extends beyond scoring a huge kill count. Victory isn't determined by the aggressive. The brash expose themselves to those willing to wait for the win to come their way. Will the average *Call of Duty* player be able to adjust to this deliberate pacing? We're not sure. But it's about time the over-the-shoulder shooter tried something new. **MITCH DYER**

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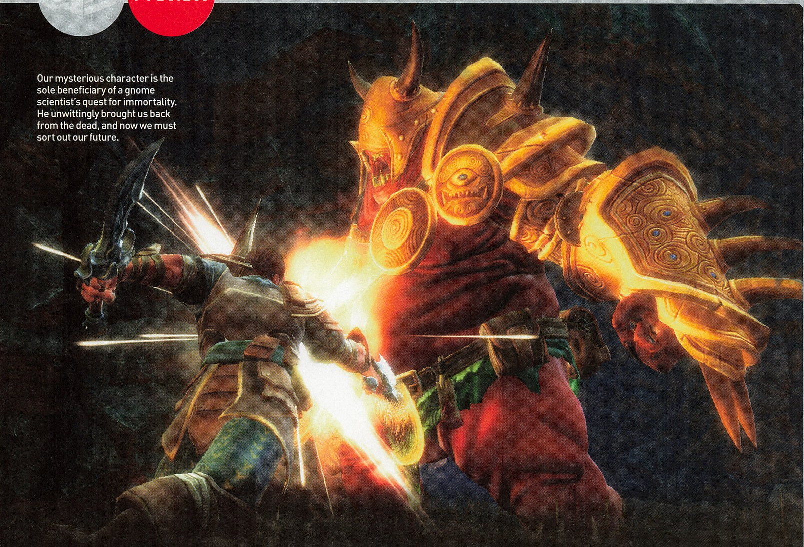


Our mysterious character is the sole beneficiary of a gnome scientist's quest for immortality. He unwittingly brought us back from the dead, and now we must sort out our future.

Format **PS3** ETA **February** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **38 Studios/Big Huge Games**

Kingdoms of Amalur
Reckoning

Breathing new life into the roleplaying genre

This is unfamiliar territory. Like our self-created protagonist in *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning*, we find ourselves disoriented in what 38 Studios calls an open-world action RPG. Our hero has been resurrected from the dead to continue the fight against the ruthless and relentless Tuatha, but the usual rules don't apply. There are no classes to designate and no set path for him to follow—none of the familiar conventions we usually associate with roleplaying games. While we choose the basic constructs of our appearance, our character's development and ultimate fate are shaped by what we learn and acquire in Amalur rather than by preset notions.

The early hours have us escaping the distinctly dungeon-esque Well of Souls. It is within these dark, dank confines we find our first weapons and begin to explore *Reckoning's* combat system—a system based on the reflexive combo-driven buttonmashing of a pure action game instead of the measured hit-point dependent confrontations of a traditional RPG. We don't yet understand how or why we've come back from the dead, but we're already facing off against enemies who realize the potential impact of our existence on Amalur's balance of power.

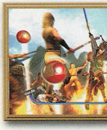
Once free of the dungeons and into the wilderness, we're enveloped by *Reckoning's* vibrant visuals. The drab colors we associate with RPGs have been left behind in the caverns. With a 25-hour main quest and hundreds of hours of promised content to follow, we anticipate many more excursions to this inviting world. **ROGER BURCHILL**

Travel Log

One concern that arose during our four-hour play session was the suspicion that *Reckoning's* "open world" tag may be a misnomer. We never felt, at least in these early portions, that we could truly venture anywhere we wanted. Instead, the world seemed like a series of expansive canyons, forests, and towns that funneled us toward other similarly restricted areas. We're hoping that Amalur opens up further as the game progresses.

SUPERCHARGE THE BATTLEFIELDS OF ANCIENT CHINA!

Brand new characters Guo Jia & Wang Yi as well as returning hero Pang De bolster the ranks of the Wei kingdom.



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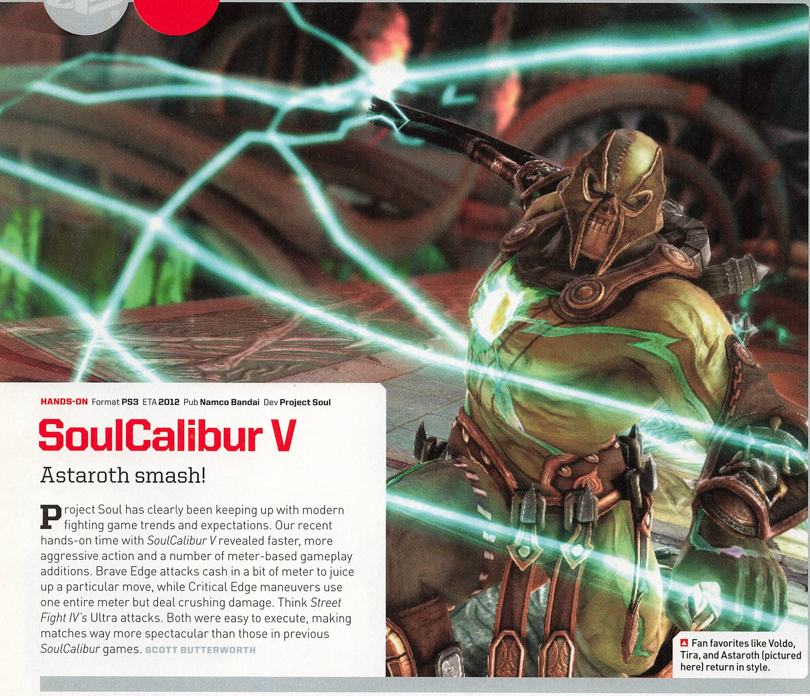


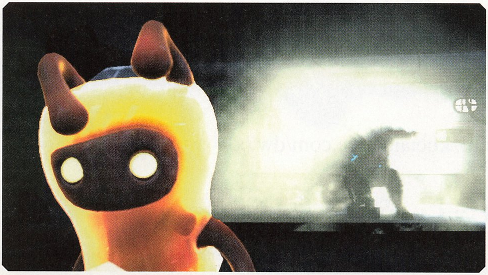
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Project Soul**

SoulCalibur V

Astaroth smash!

Project Soul has clearly been keeping up with modern fighting game trends and expectations. Our recent hands-on time with *SoulCalibur V* revealed faster, more aggressive action and a number of meter-based gameplay additions. Brave Edge attacks cash in a bit of meter to juice up a particular move, while Critical Edge maneuvers use one entire meter but deal crushing damage. Think *Street Fight IV's* Ultra attacks. Both were easy to execute, making matches way more spectacular than those in previous *SoulCalibur* games. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Fan favorites like Voldo, Tira, and Astaroth (pictured here) return in style.

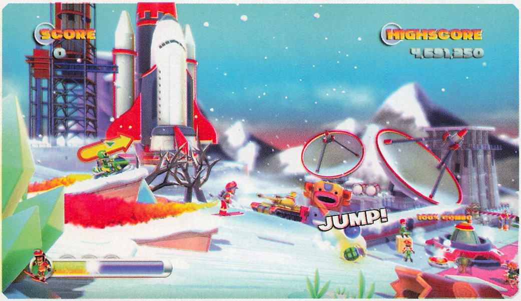


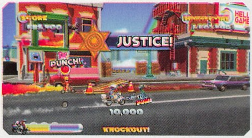
FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **Winter** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Trapdoor**

Warp

Personality that came out of nowhere

Our cute alien hero is justifiably ticked-off. Zero's been cooped up in a testing facility for far too long, and he's ready to bust out after inadvertently gaining the ability to warp through walls. Zipping through rooms would be easy if not for the deadly soldiers and sentry guns littered throughout the complex. To power through (or into) these obstacles, Zero must become a clever thinker, as well as a devastating weapon.





Pull off an amazing stunt in front of the director and he'll award more points. Bonus!

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **2012** Pub **Hello Games** Dev **Hello Games**

Joe Danger The Movie

Hollywood comes calling for PSN's most beloved daredevil

Daredevil Joe Danger and his trademark dirt bike rode out of nowhere last year, but his self-titled PSN-exclusive debut easily landed among our favorite downloadable games of 2010. Its quirky mix of simple high-flying tricks, outrageous obstacle course-style environments, and consequence-free crashes took sidescrolling stunt games back to their glorious roots, where fun reigned supreme and a little personality went a long way. However, the indie heroes at Hello Games weren't completely satisfied with the finished product. Now they've returned with *Joe Danger: The Movie*, a game with the same great soul as the original but a lot more variety and fun.

After being approached by a director with an idea for the greatest movie ever, Joe gets to work filming all manner of ridiculous action scenes. From chasing down bank robbers to stopping a mountainside nuclear missile launch, Joe's got a lot more to do and a lot more tools to do it with. We got a chance to demo his new rides—including skis, a snowmobile, a jetpack, and even a minecart, all of which offered unique experiences while still retaining that *Joe Danger* arcade feel.

After spending hours upon hours one-upping scores, mastering tracks, and even customizing our own courses in the last game, we're anxiously awaiting another stunt-filled round with our favorite daredevil.

ANDREW GROEN

Hello!

In 2009, four console-gaming veterans quit their jobs and joined forces to form an indie micro studio. Separately, they had worked on games like *Black* and *Burnout*, but together they're Hello Games.

Teleportation may be a natural fit for a game about escape and exploration, but it's *Warp's* marriage between adorability and ultra-violence that won our hearts. Wiggling around inside of something builds the energy necessary to blow it up. Exploding canisters torch nearby guards, and popping out from inside somebody repaints the clinical laboratories with a fine red finish. Destruction draws deadly attention, though, so warping from one object to the next like an unseen ninja often proved safer (and more satisfying) than slaughter.

The straightforwardness of *Warp's* structure is refreshing. It's fast, tense, tough, and packed with intelligent environment layouts. The facility as a whole—with its secret passages and challenging rooms—gives the prison-break premise depth and complexity for what's quickly becoming one of our most anticipated PSN downloads. MITCH DYER

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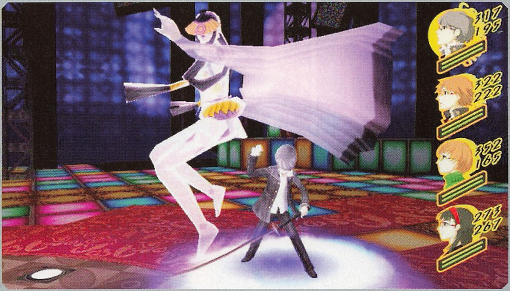
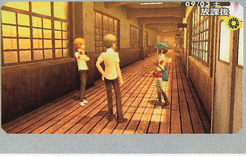
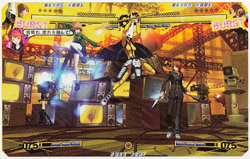
Persona 4: The Golden

Format **PSV** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Atlus**

Persona 4, a niche favorite amongst JRPG fans, is gearing up to join the growing roster of PlayStation Vita games. Dubbed *Persona 4: The Golden*, the remake will contain all the goodness of the original plus a few additional features, including a new character named Mary, improved animations, and the ability to call on friends wirelessly if we're about to die in a dungeon (sounds like a pretty sweet deal to us). With the exception of an unspecified female lead, the original cast will return in full for more wacky, near-incomprehensible antics and much more.



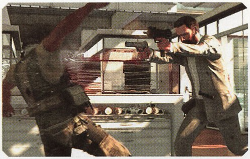




Persona 4: The Ultimate in Mayonaka Arena

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Atlus** Dev **Atlus**

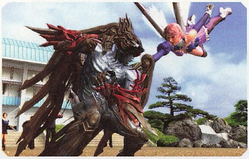
The *Persona* franchise is taking a fighting turn as Atlus gets together with *BlazBlue* developer Arc System to create *The Ultimate in Mayonaka Arena* using familiar characters from *Persona 4*.



Max Payne 3

Format **PS3** ETA **March 2012** Pub/Dev **Rockstar Games**

After many concerns voiced over bald Max, new screens for *Max Payne 3* have been released featuring the full head of hair we're accustomed to. There, now we can stop comparing him to Bruce Willis.



Tekken Hybrid

Format **PS3** ETA **December** Pub/Dev **Namco Bandai**

The *Tekken Hybrid* collection will come complete with *Tekken Tag Tournament* in HD, a full-length *Tekken* CG movie, and (perhaps most importantly to us) a playable *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* "prologue." Expect some crazy assist attacks.

Dragon's Dogma

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub/Dev **Capcom**

In *Dragon's Dogma*, players will be able to create a NPC teammate (known as a Main Pawn) who will travel with them in their parties through the game. Other players can borrow these pawns (though there will be no co-op in the game), but if the pawns die, they won't return. Be careful!

Lord of Apocalypse

Format **PSV/PSP** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub/Dev **Square Enix**

A sequel to Square Enix's action RPG *Lord of Arcana*, *Lord of Apocalypse* will be available on both PS Vita and PSP and features a fully customizable hero. Expect crisp visuals, clean combat controls, and plenty of action-packed battles with epic monsters.

CHRISTOPHER

Dungeon Hunter: Alliance

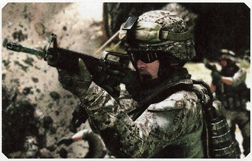
Format **PSV** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Gameloft**

Dungeon Hunter: Alliance takes advantage of PS Vita's touch capabilities to allow for fluid equipment management after we loot all the monsters we slay in this traditional hack-'n'-slash dungeon crawler.

Asura's Wrath

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Capcom** Dev **CyberConnect2**

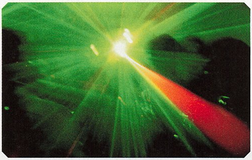
Asura isn't the only pissed-off demigod playable in *Asura's Wrath*. Yasha, Asura's brother-in-law is also in an angsty mood and blames Asura for the death of his sister. From what we can tell, his missions will play out much like Asura's but with even more excuses for badass set pieces.



Battlefield 3

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **DICE**

It goes without saying that *Battlefield 3* is one of this year's most hotly anticipated titles, so we've got some especially good news all *BF3* DLC will be available on PS3 one week earlier than on any other platform, giving us more time to start dominating the titular battlefield.



PixelJunk 4am

Format **PSN** ETA **Q4** Pub **Q-Games** Dev **Q-Games**

Not so much a game as an audio composition tool, *PixelJunk 4am*—previously known as *PixelJunk Lifelike*—allows us to use our PlayStation Move to create audio tracks, which can be streamed live over PSN for others to (possibly) enjoy.

Gut Reaction

PlayStation's highs and lows

▲DC for Free

DC Universe Online goes free-to-play in October. No more monthly fees means we'll be fighting a lot more crime.

▲Ad Hoc That!

According to Sony, PS Vita can communicate with PSPs for ad hoc multiplayer.

▲Free Game

Early purchasers of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* for PS3 receive a free copy of the original game.

▼Costly Elite

The *Call of Duty* Elite service offers a ton of robust features for fans, but the $50 a year price tag seems steep.

▼Suikoden Sorrows

A new *Suikoden* title's on the way, but so far, only the Japanese release has been confirmed.

▼Memory Priced

Saving game data on Vita may be pricey. Japanese prices for a 4GB memory card will run nearly $30, while the 32GB card will cost $124.

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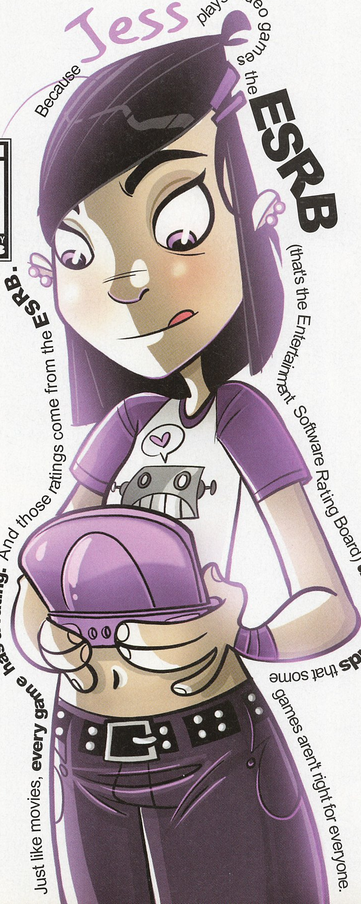

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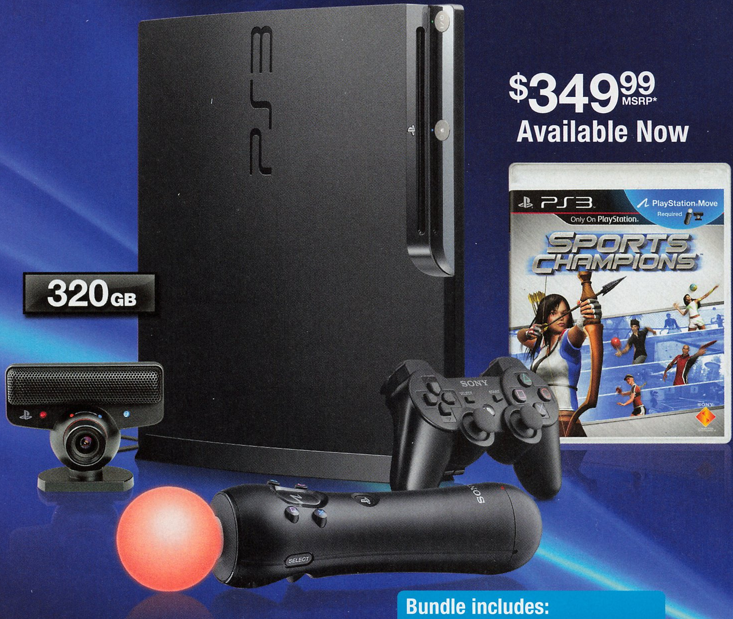

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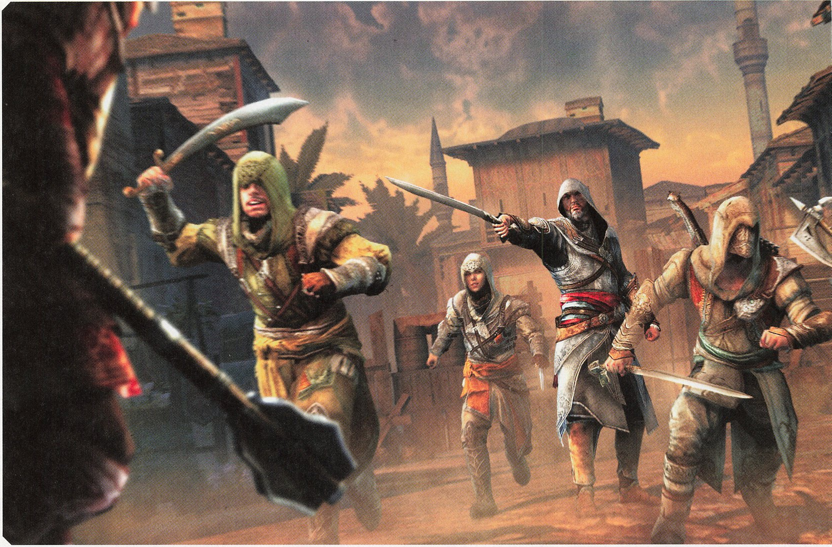
All will be REVEALED

With the Ezio Auditore trilogy fast approaching its epic conclusion, we go hands-on with **Assassin's Creed: Revelations'** campaign and discover unreleased plot details, brand new gameplay elements, and never before seen weaponry. The end is nigh, and the truth is waiting... **BY SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal/Ubisoft Annecy**

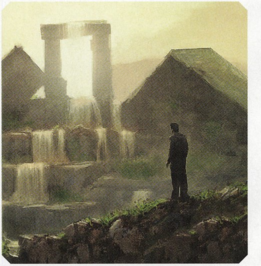


"The difference between us and the previous installments is that we will answer a lot of questions regarding that plotline."

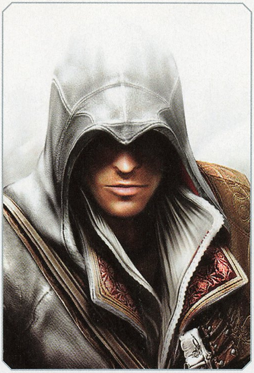
It's not often a videogame series gives its audience a chance to experience the entire lifetime of its central character, especially over the course of multiple games. *Assassin's Creed* is one of those rare, special exceptions. Through *Assassin's Creed II*, *Brotherhood*, and now *Revelations*, we've followed Ezio Auditore da Firenze's bittersweet tale, from his birth in Florence to his triumph in Rome. We've scaled countless buildings, stalked innumerable guards, and assassinated many of history's most notable villains, never forgetting our hero's tragic sacrifices. Now, after years of gaming as Ezio, his final chapter takes us to the crossroads of 16th century civilization: Constantinople.

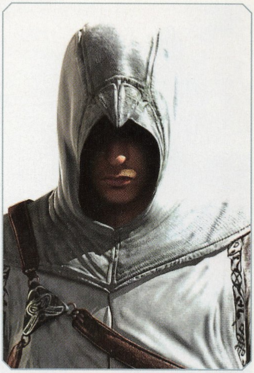
But instead of following the formula laid out in *Brotherhood*—which focused mainly on reclaiming Rome and defeating the ruling Borgia family—*Revelations* turns the focus back on the series' central conflict: the centuries-long war between the Templars and the Assassins. "It's more than a simple city," says creative director Alexandre Amancio. "The stakes are bigger. It's more of an epic goal." Rather than a straightforward tale of revenge, the story is framed as a mystery: The central villain remains in the shadows for most of the game, and Ezio's real mission is not to save Constantinople as he did Rome but to locate the keys to the hidden library of legendary assassin Altair Ibn La-Ahad, star of the original *Assassin's Creed*.

After learning of the ancient library in a letter left behind by his father, the aging Ezio travels to Masyaf—home to Altair's ancient assassin stronghold—where he discovers a band of Templars already attempting to gain entry to the chamber. While he isn't certain what he'll find locked within (we're guessing it's another mysterious and powerful Piece of Eden), he knows he cannot allow the Templars to have it. And so begins a race against time: With help from the local Assassin chapter and his elusive love interest Sophia, Ezio must not only obtain the five keys hidden around Constantinople but also learn who's pulling the Templars' strings and why. The future of the Assassin order may depend on it.



▲ "There is an optional cycle within the game where you can find ways of delving into Desmond's subconscious and actually get glimpses of his past and his pre-assassin days—where he grew up and all that," says creative director Alex Amancio.





Ezio and Altair: Not Related

At least, not by blood. Both are indeed distant ancestors of present day character Desmond Miles, but the two historical assassins are linked only by something far stranger: the fact that both are genetic hybrids, a cross between human beings and members of "a precursor civilization that existed on the planet 67,000 years ago" that supposedly created mankind. Remember the glowing goddess at the end of *Assassin's Creed II*? She's one of them.

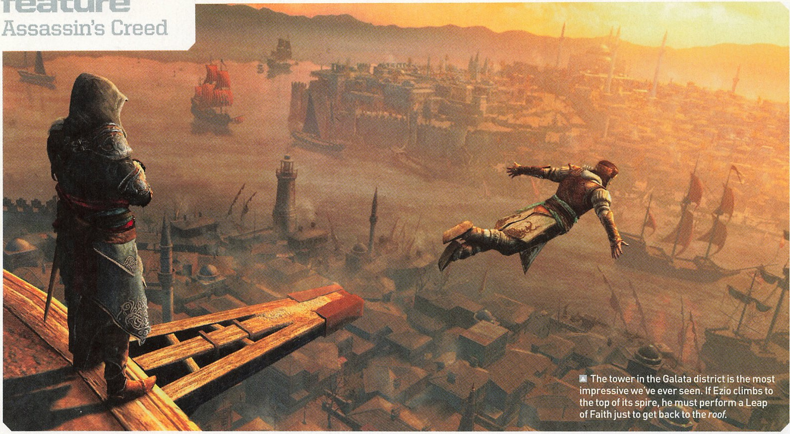
Creative director Alex Amancio explains: "Most humans sort of have that first civ gene, it's just that in some humans that blood is much more concentrated, if you will. So they have a lot more of those concentrated 'first civ' genes. Desmond is one of those, Altair is one of those, and Ezio is one of those. But not all of the Assassins are. *Revelations*' main storyline is sort of tied into [the first civ mystery]. That's still very much present. The difference between us and the previous installments is that we will answer a lot of questions regarding that plotline and really clean up the narrative so that we can actually follow up with what's to come."

Meanwhile...

Revelations is not the story of Ezio alone, however. For the first time in franchise history, the game features significant story development for all three of its central characters: Ezio, Altair, and present-day assassin Desmond Miles. "Everything in *Revelations* leads to one point at the end of the game where we reach a sort of sync nexus where the destinies of all the characters really align, and then you understand why Ezio was such an important character that he needed three games, what his relation to Altair is, and ultimately how that plays out with Desmond's storyline," explains Amancio.

Because the library keys that Altair hid are actually artifacts left behind by the same technologically advanced precursor civilization that created the Apple of Eden (see sidebar above), Ezio is able to use them to experience important portions of Altair's life. For players, that means whole sections of gameplay as classic protagonist Altair—presumably one per key.

The section we played picked up literally seconds after the final moments of the first game: Altair had just killed his corrupt mentor Al Mualim and was solemnly carrying the



The tower in the Galata district is the most impressive we've ever seen. If Ezio climbs to the top of its spire, he must perform a Leap of Faith just to get back to the *roof*.

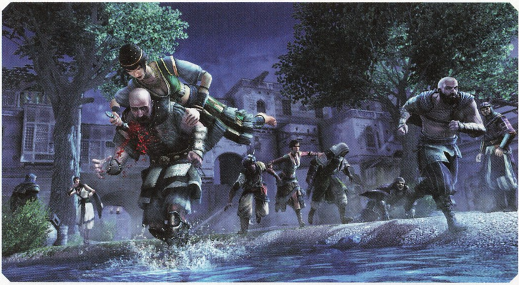
body to the outer walls of Masyaf. As he tried to justify his actions to his brethren, an all-Assassin riot suddenly erupted. As we desperately disarmed our attackers, a rival assassin appeared above us wielding the all-important Apple. Unfortunately, its power overwhelmed him, and the Apple began emitting blasts of energy, which we had to avoid while climbing a tower to reach and disarm our comrade. Once we reclaimed the Apple, the memory sequence came to a close.

Of course, as in past *Creed* games, all of this was taking place inside the mind of Desmond Miles, a descendent of both Altair and Ezio who relives his ancestors' memories using a machine called the Animus. Unlike the previous games, however, Desmond's mind is on the verge of total collapse. Following *Brotherhood's* cliffhanger ending, he's completely comatose and can't even connect to the usual Animus interface. As a result, his consciousness has sunk deeper into the machine, reaching a low-level "safe mode" known as the Island. So while Ezio is tracking down keys and Altair is fighting to protect the Apple, Desmond is trying to piece together his fragmented memories and wake the hell up.

Bizarre Bazaar

Despite the inclusion of these three separate yet interrelated storylines, the primary focus remains firmly on Ezio and his quest in Constantinople, where he'll rub elbows with Turkish royalty like the famed Sultan Suleiman. Though the map as a whole is smaller than *Brotherhood's* Rome, the actual city is larger, denser, and more topographically diverse, with huge rolling hills and deep waterways. The cultural tone varies drastically from previous *Creed* games as well. As we toured the city streets with the local Assassin leader—the outspoken but charismatic Yusuf Tazim—we encountered softly burning incense, countless Persian rugs, markets exploding with color, and women in hijabs. We could practically smell the spices hanging in the air.

Naturally, many other aspects of city life have not changed: Ezio can still scale towering structures and sync with his location to flesh out the map. He can still hire mercenaries, thieves, or Romani (who replace courtesans) to assist him. He can even still purchase businesses like blacksmiths and banks. What has changed, however, is the local power dynamic. Whereas past games



Softly burning incense, countless Persian rugs, markets exploding with color—we could practically smell the spices hanging in the air.

PS3 PlayStation®Network

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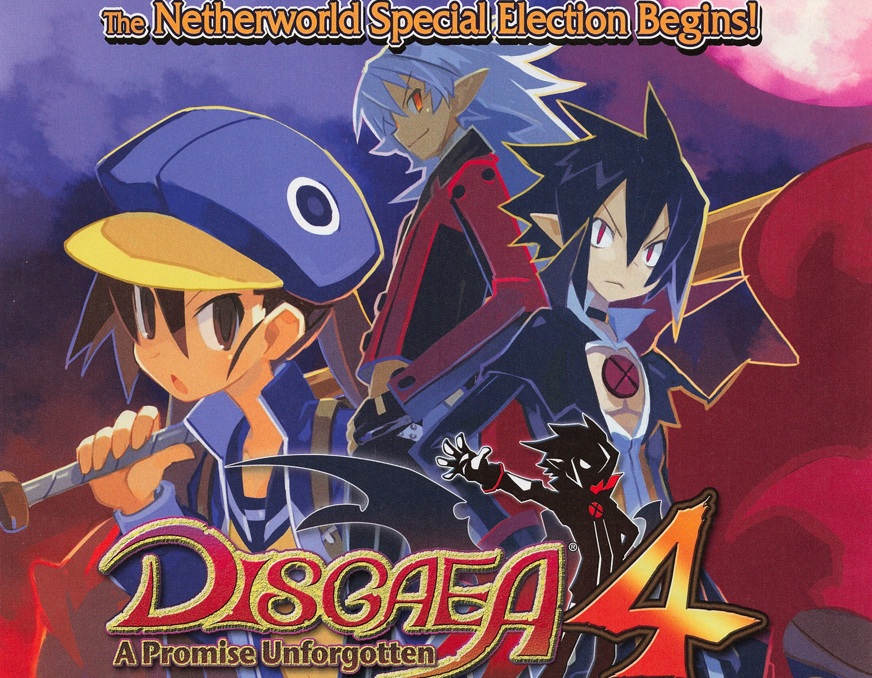
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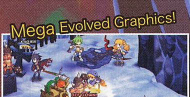
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- Animated Blood
- Drug Reference
- Fantasy Violence
- Language
- Suggestive Themes

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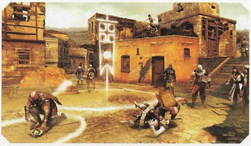
▲ "Every single element that we've added to *Revelations* had to obey one rule: It needs to consolidate at least two or more of the core gameplay pillars," explains creative director Alex Amancio.



always kept Ezio on the defensive since he was essentially a fugitive at all times, Constantinople's Ottoman law enforcement adopts a neutral stance toward the Assassins. As long as they don't attack the guards, the guards won't attack them.

This is not to say, however, that Ezio is without enemies. Constantinople is overrun with Byzantine loyalists who are controlled by the Templars, and they *will* attack Ezio with little provocation. Lucky for him, the Assassin presence in the city is strong (and reveres Ezio for all his accomplishments), and the Ottomans will actually come to Ezio's aide if they see him being attacked—their only agenda is maintaining order. Outnumbered and low on health? Draw the Templars toward an Ottoman patrol and watch the fireworks.

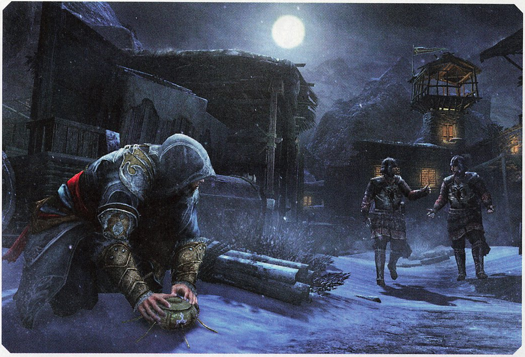
Templar of Doom

Of course, this opposition hasn't stopped the Byzantines from erecting strongholds called Templar Dens all around the city. Similar to the Borgia Towers in *Brotherhood*, these dens allow the Templars to exert control over the surrounding area, but Ezio can wrest this power away by assassinating the den's leader and igniting its main tower. Only this time there's a twist: Once Ezio liberates a den, there's a chance the Templars will try to forcibly reclaim it. The previous games' Notoriety system has been replaced by a Templar Awareness meter, which, rather than measuring the amount of time it will take for enemies to recognize and attack Ezio, gauges the Templars' overall...well, awareness of all Assassin activities. Once it reaches a certain level, they'll attack, so it's Ezio's job to keep a low profile and not screw things up for everyone else.

What happens if the Templars do attack? A tower defense mini-game. Seriously.

As per usual, Ezio can bribe heralds and assassinate witnesses to lower the Awareness level, but what happens if the Templars do attack? A tower defense mini-game. Seriously. From a fixed vantage point, Ezio selects units like riflemen and archers from a radial menu and places them strategically on rooftops above the den's main barricade, where waves of Templar soldiers hack away at his defenses. They'll even bring various vehicles like battering rams and fire-spitting tanks, but Ezio can eventually counter these using a cannon that he aims and fires with a cursor. It's an unusual departure from *Creed's* freerunning and swordplay, but those who dislike their new duties can simply train up an assassin and leave him in charge of the den to handle any future attacks.

While the developers have definitively stated that this will be Ezio and Altair's final game, they were coy about Desmond's future.



Explosives are great when we're the ones setting them off, but in the hands of enemies, they can be aggravating and tough to avoid.

That's right, just as in *Brotherhood*, we'll be able to train our own private army of assassins. But this too has been subject to a few twists. Though we can still recruit random citizens by saving them from Templar guards, certain candidates can only be recruited once we've completed a mission for them. Then, once the recruit has earned enough experience to become a "Master Assassin," he accompanies us on an actual assassination mission in what Amancio calls "a co-op approach to *Assassin's Creed*." According to Amancio, the developers hope these added narrative elements will create a deeper attachment to our assassins and, therefore, a greater sense of accomplishment. Honestly, we just hope they call us "master."

Hooked

The rest of *Revelations*' underlying gameplay mechanics remain largely unchanged from previous *Creed* titles: Ezio still parkours his way through dense urban environments, pulling himself up the sides of buildings, sprinting across rooftops, and diving into bails of hay. The melee-focused combat still relies heavily on counterattack and disarming maneuvers, though, as always, Ezio can equip heavier weapons like axes to really wail on his enemies. And the iconic hidden blades on Ezio's wrists still facilitate endless varieties of stealthy murder.

Though this should all sound familiar to fans, the developers have provided a few new toys sure to spice up the action. Number one: bombs. Bombs of all shapes and sizes, actually. While exploring Constantinople, Ezio will acquire ingredients that can later be converted into custom explosives. By choosing from different casings and additives, he can create anything from a standard, fast-exploding smoke bomb to a proximity mine that releases a deadly cloud of poison. Whether the aim is distraction or destruction, the possibilities are nearly endless.

More important, however, is the Hookblade—which is exactly what it sounds like. This multipurpose tool augments nearly every facet of *Revelations*' gameplay in some clever way. In combat, it can be used to whip unsuspecting foes into their allies, but it can also be used to leapfrog opponents or pull down nearby scaffolding, allowing Ezio to avoid an unwanted fight. When traversing the city, Ezio can use the Hookblade to grab ledges that would otherwise be out of reach—either while jumping between buildings or while traveling up the side of one. Best of all, Ezio can use it to take advantage of the city's many ziplines. This not only offers a quick and exciting way to get around (imagine diving onto a zipline after falling from a great height) but also a chance for some seriously cool assassinations.

Assassins, Engage

Useful as it may be, the Hookblade comes with an important catch: Its abilities are active not passive, meaning players must learn to punch the Circle button at just the right moment rather than simply holding the "high profile" trigger and letting Ezio do all the work. "Traditionally, *Assassin's Creed* is very movement-based, except when you fight it tends to be very static," explains Amancio. "So this was an element designed to add a more proactive ingredient." Proactive indeed. As we soared across ziplines over a seemingly bottomless underground cavern during one of the game's new set-piece–driven action sequences, we had to constantly save ourselves with last second grabs as an ancient wooden structure collapsed beneath us or flimsy ropes suddenly snapped. The added pressure was exhilarating and finally put control back in our hands.

New sections like this cave chase are just one small part of what makes *Revelations* the most ambitious *Creed* game to date. Not only does it represent the culmination of years of refinements and additions, it should finally tie up these stories we've become so invested in and expose the vast conspiracy that's controlled the entire course of human history.

Now, about *Assassin's Creed III*...

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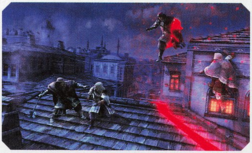

Brotherhood's award-winning multiplayer returns in *Revelations* with all new ways to stalk and kill our friends and enemies. To learn more, scan the QR code or visit our YouTube channel at youtube.com/ptomvideo.

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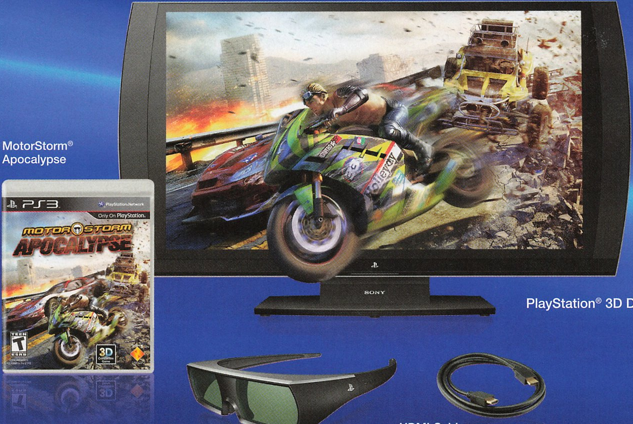
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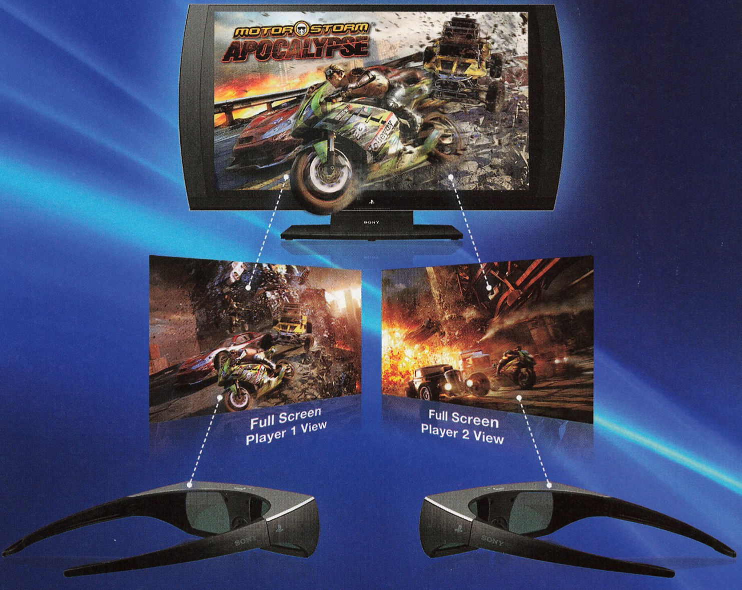
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PLAYSTATION'S TEN SMARTEST DEVELOPERS

The minds shaping the next wave of PS3 greatness

WHAT'S NEXT FOR HIDEO KOJIMA?

Solid Snake's story has ended, but Kojima's is far from over

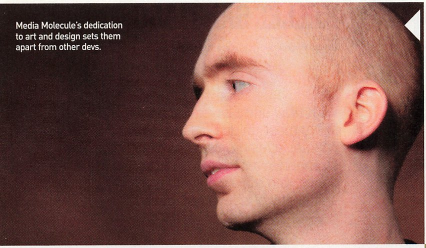
Kojima Productions has revealed their next project: the Fox Engine. This technology not only renders gorgeous real-time visuals, but allows Kojima and his team to make big-budget games in much shorter time frames.

1 HIDEO KOJIMA

Studio > Konami **Twitter** > @hideo_kojima_en
Current Project > MGS Rising **Career Highlight** > Metal Gear Solid 3

Shaping the future by blurring the line between gamer and game

Kojima is the architect of the decade-spanning *Metal Gear Solid* series. His passion for western cinema means he's dedicated as much to story as gameplay, but nobody else knows how to utilize the fourth wall quite like him. Now Kojima is set to influence all of gaming once again with his PS3/PS Vita cloud save Transfarring system and Fox Engine graphics tech.


Media Molecule's dedication to art and design sets them apart from other devs.

2

ALEX EVANS

Studio > Media Molecule **Twitter** > @mmalex
Current Project > Unannounced **Career Highlight** > LittleBigPlanet

Shaping the future by turning players into designers

Evans left Lionhead to found Media Molecule with a handful of friends and landed a knockout punch with *LittleBigPlanet*. Cue more "easy" sequels? Bah. The team's new mystery project has nothing to do with Sackboy. Bold.

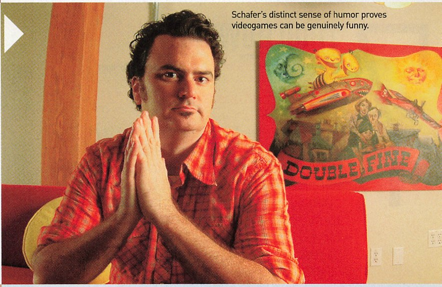
3

TIM SCHAFER

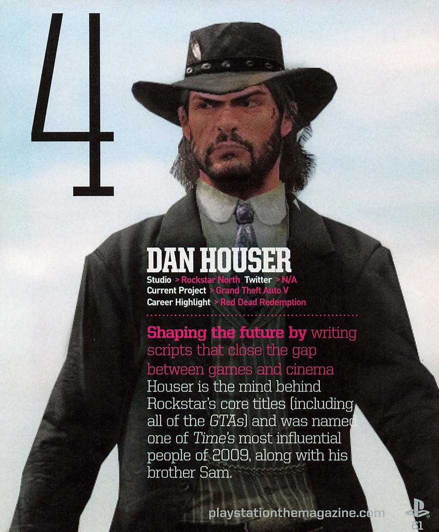
Studio > Double Fine Productions **Twitter** > @timoflegend
Current Project > Sesame Street: Once Upon a Monster
Career Highlight > The Secret of Monkey Island

Shaping the future by leading invention and creativity on PSN

Schafer's first big project was working on the script for classic adventure game *Monkey Island*. Since then, all his games have made effective use of humor, and more recently, his studio has combined this comedic gift with innovative design for superb PSN titles like *Stacking*.


Schafer's distinct sense of humor proves videogames can be genuinely funny.

4

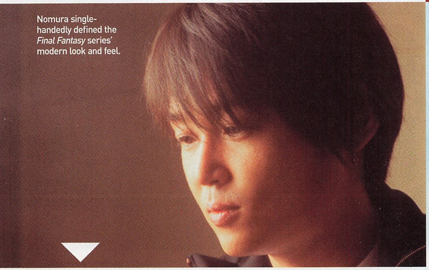


DAN HOUSER

Studio > Rockstar North **Twitter** > N/A
Current Project > Grand Theft Auto V
Career Highlight > Red Dead Redemption

Shaping the future by writing scripts that close the gap between games and cinema

Houser is the mind behind Rockstar's core titles (including all of the *GTAs*) and was named one of *Time*'s most influential people of 2009, along with his brother Sam.


Nomura single-handedly defined the *Final Fantasy* series' modern look and feel.

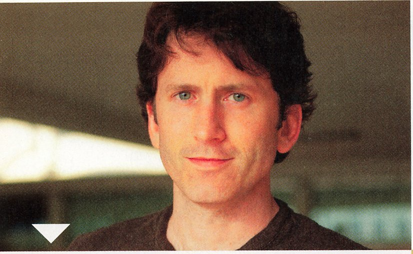
5

TETSUYA NOMURA

Studio > Square Enix **Twitter** > N/A
Current Project > Final Fantasy Versus XIII
Career Highlight > Kingdom Hearts

Shaping the future by bringing *Final Fantasy* back to its roots

Starting with *Final Fantasy VII*, Nomura shaped both gameplay sensibilities and visual design for what has become gaming's most iconic RPG franchise. *Versus XIII* harkens back to that era.



6

KELLEE SANTIAGO

Studio > thatgamecompany **Twitter** > N/A
Current Project > Journey **Career Highlight** > Flower

Shaping the future by challenging perceptions of what a game can be

With *fl0w* and *Flower*, Santiago produced PSN's most unique games. *Journey* is just as original, adding online co-op with voiceless strangers over PSN. A background of travel, dance, and even clowning gives her a fresh and highly effective approach.

7

TODD HOWARD

Studio > Bethesda **Twitter** > N/A
Current Project > The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim **Career Highlight** > Fallout 3

Shaping the future by making the hardcore RPG mainstream

As creative lead, Howard oversaw both *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*—two very different yet massively successful roleplaying games. Not bad for a man whose applications to work at Bethesda were routinely rejected in the early '90s. Now with *Skyrim* on the horizon, Howard's work is set to reach more gamers than ever.

Ueda's passion for emotive storytelling gives his projects a heart and soul other games lack.

8

FUMITO UEDA

Studio > Team Ico **Twitter** > @fumito_ueda
Current Project > The Last Guardian **Career Highlight** > Ico

Shaping the future by integrating medium-defining animation with soulful experiences

Ueda is not only a perfectionist who won't release a game until it's absolutely ready, he's also a storyteller who proves that games are capable of stirring emotions. *The Last Guardian* combines the gentle melancholy of his debut *Ico* with the mythic grandeur of *Shadow of the Colossus*.

9

YOSHINORI ONO

Studio > Capcom **Twitter** > @yoshi_onochin
Current Project > Street Fighter X Tekken **Career Highlight** > Street Fighter IV

Shaping the future by rescuing a genre

A long-time fan of *Street Fighter*, Ono was absolutely determined that his pitch to create *Street Fighter IV* be accepted by Capcom. By reassembling much of the team that made *SFII*, he struck gold, singlehandedly reinvigorating a genre most had abandoned. Now Ono is in charge of the first ever *Street Fighter/Tekken* crossover.

10

KEN LEVINE

Studio > Irrational Games **Twitter** > @iglevine
Current Project > BioShock Infinite **Career Highlight** > BioShock

Shaping the future by championing complex ideas without compromise

Levine boldy infused shooter *BioShock* with objectivist ideals. This philosophical movement, founded by Ayn Rand, was a key influence on bank chief Alan Greenspan, whose policies may have contributed to the world's finanical woes. *Infinite* has similarly grand inspiration: physicists like Einstein and Heisenberg and the ideals of American exceptionalism. Few devs so adeptly meld big ideas with accessible design.

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PlayStation® The Official Magazine

Reviews

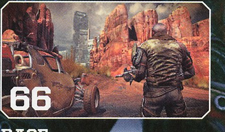
Your essential guide to new releases

The holiday season is going to be absolutely insane. We can barely even keep track of all of the truly massive titles slated to hit store shelves over the next few months, including follow-ups to some of our favorite games: *Modern Warfare*, *Battlefield*, *Uncharted*, *Batman*, and of course, this month's cover game, *Assassin's Creed*. And on and on...

But we can't let all the big guys crowd our vision because standing just behind them is a wide array of games that, while perhaps not as recognizable, have plenty to offer. Take *Child of Eden*, for instance. It may not be a big-name sequel, but it's intoxicating visuals and dynamic soundtrack engage us in a sensory experience unlike anything else on the platform.

Then there's From Software's *Dark Souls*, a deliberately difficult RPG that demands intense skill, patience, and commitment. It may not have the mainstream appeal of *Batman*, but it's truly a gamer's game.

And of course, there's more: id's new original shooter *Rage*, the next *Ace Combat* game, and a bevy of bite-sized PSN title. So readers, don't be afraid to expand your horizons. Support the little guys and pick up something unexpected!

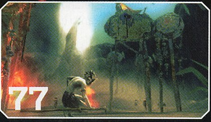


RAGE

We're not sure what the title's so mad about. Well, other than the apocalypse that turned Earth into a wasteland. But come on, it's a really nice wasteland!

NBA 2K12

With sports games growing ever more realistic, we began to wonder if our skills would carry over to the real court. Then we remembered carry-overs are a foul.



FROM DUST

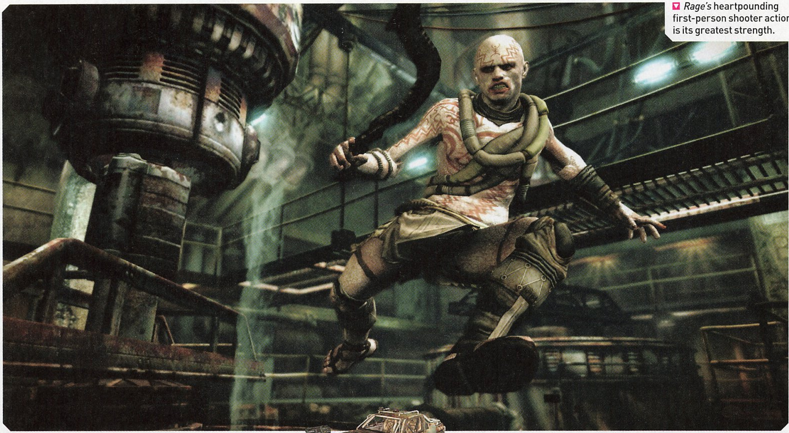
We've always liked playing god, so we're happy that we're now able to enjoy the experience in a much more literal sense. Beware, tiny people of some volcanic island. We're running the show now!

How we score our reviews...

10	**Awesome**	Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.
9	**Excellent**	Highly recommended and a great investment.
8	**Great**	Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.
7	**Good**	Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.
6	**Acceptable**	A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.
5	**Mediocre**	A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.
4	**Flawed**	Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.
3	**Poor**	A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.
2	**Awful**	A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.
1	**Raw Sewage**	Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Rage's heartpounding first-person shooter actio is its greatest strength.

Rage

A fast, furious, and fragmented future

Info

PS3
RAGE
FROM THE CREATORS OF DOOM AND QUAKE
M
Bethesda

Format PS3
Pub Bethesda
Dev id Software
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the end of the world according to Mad Max.

Fifteen years is a long time to wait for a brave new world, especially when that world is id Software's first all-new IP since the birth of its venerated *Quake* franchise. *Rage* comes loaded with familiar elements of that hallmark shooter series—most notably its polished gunplay aimed at offing mutated monstrosities—but like the asteroid that shatters humanity's existence in *Rage's* storyline, id blasts FPS genre conventions by infusing the game with vehicular racing and combat elements.

The shooter portion of the formula, as expected, succeeds wonderfully. There's a special frenetic quality to id shooters, and *Rage* does an outstanding job of evolving the adrenaline-pumping *Quake* experience with spine-tingling attacks by waves of agile, acrobatic mutants. *Rage* often had us desperately wheeling around and blasting away at swarming hordes in a way that made us feel on the edge of control but still able to administer precise shots. Still other confrontations pitted us against the game's more disciplined and better equipped enemies—like the wasteland bandits and Authority troops—and resulted in the more contained, cover-driven firefights usually associated with modern shooters.

The weapons cover the standard gamut from pistols to shotguns to automatic weapons and have the distinction of never feeling over- or underpowered for the occasion—until near the game's end (more on that later). What *Rage* does differently is broaden the breadth and depth of its arsenal in a variety of different ways: weapons can be modified, specialized ammo can be purchased, and combat "assistants" like armed spider-bots and sentry towers can be engineered. While there's a natural leveling-up progression that occurs, many of these elements are left to us to explore and utilize at our discretion.

Roll Playing

It's when *Rage* moves away from its core shooter gameplay that its experience becomes muddled. The game's two distinct driving elements break down into track-based circuit racing that earns vehicle upgrades and *Twisted Metal*-like vehicular combat out on the open wastelands. Both driving playstyles are agreeably executed with accessible control and predictable handling, but neither feels particularly well integrated into the overall game.

Stranger Danger Five things out to kill us in Rage

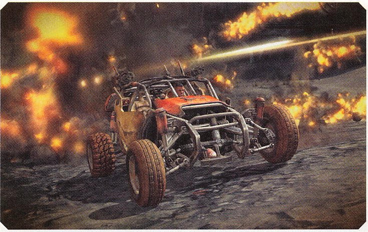
The Gov'ment
The Authority is "the man" of the future intent on keeping the people down.

Commute Traffic
Road rage incidents have reached epidemic proportions in the wastelands.

Variety Shows
TV is bad for us. "Mutant Bash TV's" arena battles are especially bad for us.

The Locals
Innocuous comments about punk rock's post-modern relevance can lead to trouble.

NASCAR
Racin' is no longer just rubbin' in the future, it's rubbin' us out of existence.



The online multiplayer in *Rage* is focused solely on combat driving. It's fun, but the lack of standard FPS multiplayer feels like a major omission.

The game's vision of a post-apocalyptic world is stunningly detailed.

League racing often feels like a grind with the only aim being to max out our ride's armor, performance, and weaponry so we can more easily survive our frequent sojourns through the wasteland. The *Road Warrior*-esque cars are cool looking and fun to pilot, but *Rage's* staid driving experience stands in marked contrast to its involving shooter play.

Misfires

If there's any element that stands above and beyond other shooters, it's *Rage's* post-apocalyptic world. This is truly a beautiful game with superb art direction, filled with interesting characters and highly detailed environments. The rich, atmospheric world inspired us to explore every nook and cranny and to speak to every inhabitant, but the manner of these interactions left us wanting. *Rage* seems to promise a *Fallout*-like experience, but we're never actually given a chance to *engage* the game's fascinating characters. We're merely narrated to and given a seemingly endless series of similar fetch quests and tedious side-missions.

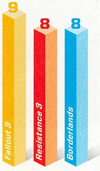
Although described as an open-world game, *Rage* is a very linear experience. The opportunity to explore "freely" only comes when we put off fulfilling core storyline objectives, and every new area we explored ultimately had just one path that actually lead anywhere—even the "open" wasteland is essentially a series of canyons that funnels us to the next area or settlement to explore. While this tightly controlled design path optimizes encounters in the game's shooter portions, it feels as if the potential of this alluring world is never fully realized.

Rage's ending too, feels abrupt and truncated. For approximately three quarters of the game, the narrative unfolds at a steady, measured pace. But when we reach Subway Town, we perform a few missions before a major figure is inelegantly removed from the storyline and we're thrust directly into the game's concluding levels. We also acquire an Authority Pulse Cannon during this final push—a weapon so powerful that it drastically undermines the challenge of the game's final swarming enemies. We actually saved BFG rounds (the Pulse Cannon's secondary firing mode) in anticipation of facing off against a giant, final boss only to discover that there was none!

It's a feeling that encapsulates *Rage*: a deeply layered, exhilarating game in parts, but one that never coalesces to deliver a cohesive new experience.

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
7

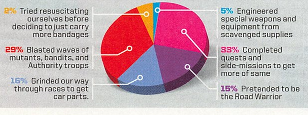
ROGER BURCHILL



ScorePole

Rage may be the best looking post-apocalyptic shooter, but it's not quite the best playing.

What we did in... Rage



Dogfight mode means the end of bogeys as dinky dots and the start of harrowing chase views and up-close and personal action.

Ace Combat Assault Horizon

Locked on target

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Namco Bandai
Dev Project Aces
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like cool air combat stuff with none of the boring realism.

We're on the tail of *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon's* main villain using the game's new Dogfight mode (DFM). The camera pulls in under our F-22's belly for a super-sexy view of the missiles and cannon fire we're using to pepper our nemesis. Suddenly he pulls a counter-maneuver, flipping around and getting on our six. Time for a *counter*-counter maneuver...

Assault Horizon's dogfights deliver the most intense fun we've had in *any* game in a long time. Slickly scripted swoops past famous landmarks are woven seamlessly into the action. Throw in helicopter and bomber missions along with chopper and AC-130 gunning, and we have a well-rounded, perfectly paced campaign. Unlockable aircraft and weapon choices create replay value even after the DFM's screaming intensity wears off.

Assault Horizon's visuals and audio pump up the excitement to a whole other level. In particular, the music presents a balanced mix of infectious, chugging Heavy Metal and soaring, epic orchestral cues, bringing surprising gravity to situations. Flight sim fans looking for more realism won't find it here, but if there was ever an argument for fun over reality, *Assault Horizon* is it.

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MATT KEAST

Those unfamiliar with F1's speed might wear out the finite flashback system on tighter tracks. Be prepared for complete restarts.

F1 2011

This year's tune-up is a qualified success

This year's model, *F1 2011*, improves on last year's game in almost every way: qualifying is real, pitting works, and the handling no longer feels ripped from the *Dirt* series. It delivers a satisfying mix of "heavy in the corners, twitchy on the straights" driving and is now as fast and dangerous as F1 racing should feel.

The best features are the sport's new toys: KERS and DRS. The Kinetic Energy Recovery System is a boost which refills each lap and can be spent in bits or all at once. The Drag Reduction System, meanwhile, opens the rear wing for a huge speed increase but can only be used in a specific zone during races. In qualifying, however, DRS is unlimited, creating a challenging mix of strategy and bravery.

It's a sharper, smarter F1 experience...at least on certain tracks. Specific weaknesses in the A.I. and penalty systems still wrecked the tighter circuits. It's a shame because open circuits such as Canada and Spa worked beautifully as we battled against combative opponents, a fantastic dynamic weather system, and complex damage mechanics.

Off the circuit, the improved press interactions remain a throwaway, but car upgrades and team objectives inject some life into the career, while online we're promised 16 player races (with eight A.I.) for a full F1 experience.

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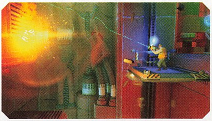
JAMES COATES

Info

Format PS3
Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters Birmingham
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like the most authentic F1 experience to date.

Rochard

Format **PSN** Pub **Sony Online Entertainment** Dev **Recoil Games** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**



Space miner John Rochard's gravity gun and the game's puzzles have a distinctly *Portal* vibe, but we were still hooked throughout *Rochard's* four-hour campaign thanks to clever design and sarcastic humor. Rochard can manipulate gravity to reach high ledges or use his upgradeable G-Lifter to move crates and other objects to create stairways that bypass the impenetrable force fields that comprise each puzzle. The gun can also shoot lasers and launch explosives to destroy the pesky space pirates after Rochard's head. Puzzles were never too frustrating, and Rochard's witty commentary really worked, despite his shoddy southern accent. **RYAN TALJONICK**

PlayStation 8

Rocketbirds Hardboiled Chicken

Format **PSN** Pub **Ratloop Asia** Dev **Ratloop Asia** Price **$11.99** ESRB **Mature**

Replace the bad guys in an '80s Schwarzenegger movie with tyrannical penguins and you'll have something akin to *Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken*. It's a quirky, bloody, run-and-gunner interspersed with jetpack segments and a story that straddles the line between hysterical and disturbing. We absolutely loved the presentation, which consists of beautiful 2D graphics and some of the most rocking music we've heard from a game in a while. Touchy controls made for a few frustrating segments, but clever level design, interesting gameplay mechanics, and two-player co-op missions make it easy to forgive the game's issues. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

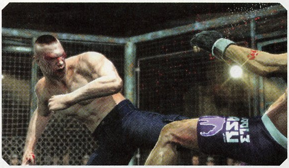
PlayStation 8

Zombie Apocalypse 2

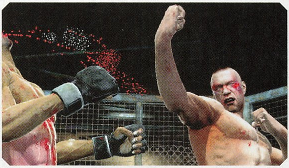
Format **PSN** Pub **Konami** Dev **Backbone Entertainment** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

The original *Zombie Apocalypse* was good for some brainless fun, but many criticized its small scale and repetitive gameplay. Everything is bigger and better in *Zombie Apocalypse 2: Never Die Alone*. We still stroll around blasting zombies with the analog sticks in typical top-down shooter style, but the missions are larger and more epic, feeling like actual levels instead of tiny arenas. There are four different classes too, each with significantly different weapons and abilities. Gameplay can still get repetitive from time to time (especially if played alone), but the improvements make it a worthwhile sequel if you can manage to wrangle in some friends. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

PlayStation 7



Supremacy MMA's focus is on the gore, not fighting technique.



Supremacy MMA

Meh-MA

Info

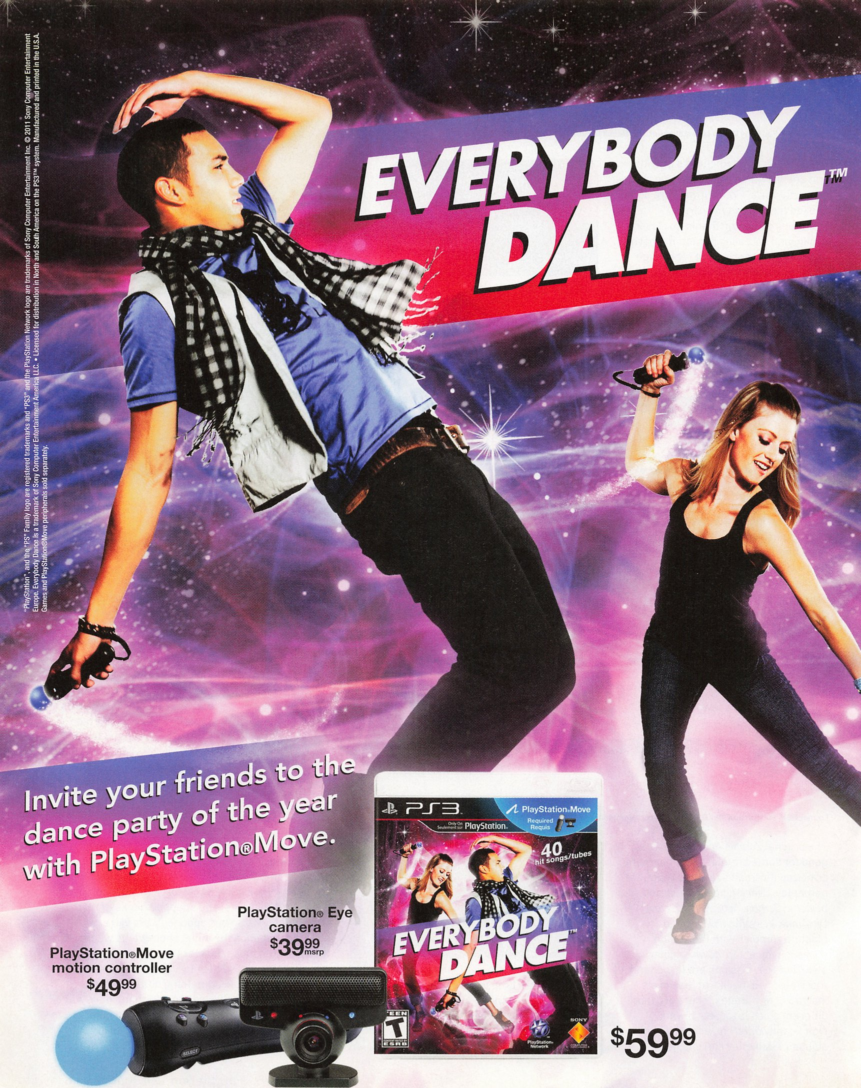
PS3
Supremacy
MMA
RP
505 GAMES

Format PS3
Pub 505 Games
Dev Kung Fu Factory
Price $49.99
ESRB Mature
It's like *Mortal Kombat* meets *UFC*, but not in a good way.

With the continued success of mixed martial arts and the resurgence of the bloody fighting game genre, it's not surprising some industrious developer thought to combine the two into one brutal package. That simple math resulted in *Supremacy MMA*, which lacks a name brand for its ultimate fighting but attempts to make up for it by offering one of the most realistic yet excessively violent brawlers we've seen. That is not a compliment.

With shallow combat that still requires a time commitment to learn, most fights descend into strategy-free buttonmashing in short order. The design emphasis isn't on deep, skillful combat but on bone-crushing visuals that make everyone queasy. The broken legs, coma-inducing knockouts, and snapped necks (that undoubtedly killed our opponent) are viscerally realized, but once the initial shock value wears off, it's clear that these finishers are ultimately just a gimmick. We praise the story mode for at least trying to do something different, but with only perfunctory online play, we're left with a fighting game that offers plenty of blood and guts but very little meat. **HENRY GILBERT**

PlayStation 5


PS3
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PlayStation Move
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PlayStation Network
SONY
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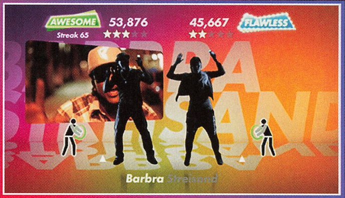
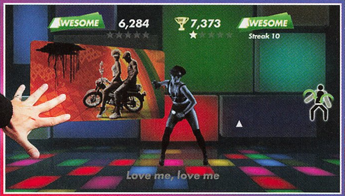
40 hit songs


AWESOME
Streak 65
53,876
45,667
FLAWLESS
Barbra Streisand

Play with up to 20 friends in Party mode


AWESOME
6,284
7,373
AWESOME
Streak 10
Love me, love me

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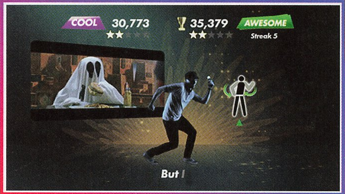
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30,773
35,379
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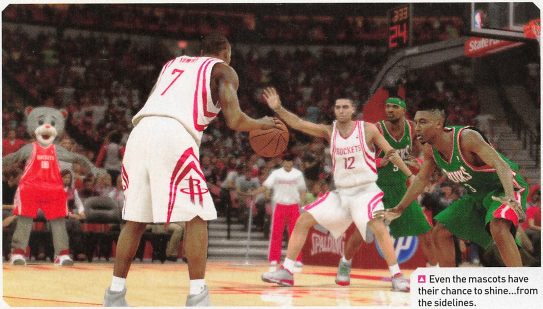
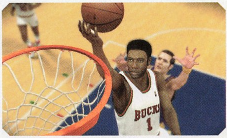
PlayStation Move

PlayStation 3

PlayStation Network



Even the mascots have their chance to shine...from the sidelines.

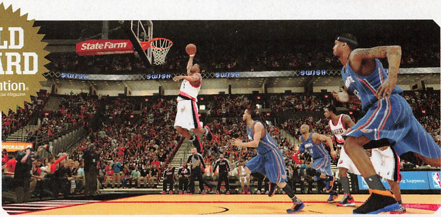


Precise timing and consistent execution are the true keys to success in *NBA 2K12*.

NBA 2K12

Elevating the game

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine



Shoetime

Footwear now plays a prominent role in *NBA 2K12* with a selection of kicks available from adidas, Converse, Reebok, Nike, and Air Jordan to customize our personally created baller. Success on the court can also lead to signature shoes, endorsement deals, and commercials.

Make no mistake, *NBA 2K11* was a very good game. So good that rival EA Sports didn't even let its *NBA Elite* take the court to compete. But there's a difference between a strong contender and a champion; while *2K11* was clearly last year's best available basketball game, *NBA 2K12* has the stuff that establishes dynasties.

Graphics, gameplay, and presentation once again lead the highlight reel in *2K12*. Player models we deemed excellent just a year ago are even more photo realistic—detailed down to the tattoos, which 2K promises to update as real NBA players add new ink during the course of the upcoming year (no, we're not kidding).

Yet as startlingly accurate as the player models are, it's the smoothness and realism exhibited in the animation that truly differentiates *2K12* from its predecessor. Gone are last year's canned animations that tied our hands after a move was initiated (lending a sense of sluggish to the action and controls). Now if the defense cuts off our drive to the lane, we can instantly adjust our shot angle or choose to pass off to a teammate on the fly. It's a refinement that adds a reflexive and spontaneous element to the game that superbly mimics the real-life experience.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** 2K Sports
Dev Visual Concepts
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like we won't mind the NBA lockout one bit.

The broadcast-style presentation has also been improved by dialing back its intrusiveness. Last year's game could easily be mistaken for live TV, but all the flash often kept us from being able to quickly jump back into the b-ball action.

Backing up the on-court action is an exhaustive array of game modes and customization features. The Association will satisfy those looking for a Franchise-type mode, but it's the My Player mode that let us create our doppelganger and follow him from the NBA draft through an entire career that kept our attention. The ability to acquire Skill points with our on-court performance and then use those points to further develop different aspects of our player's game proved to be an addicting RPG-like wrinkle.

Last year's Jordan Challenge was a superb piece of fan service that allowed basketball diehards to relive Michael Jordan's greatest game. Jordan returns again this year in a slightly less prominent role, but the new NBA's Greatest mode allows us to experience the signature games of 14 additional legendary players including Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Julius Erving. Once we lead our legend to victory, the classic teams are unlocked and join the standard roster of teams available for play—it's great for setting up fantasy matchups. Shaq vs. Wilt, anyone?

Beyond its highly polished gameplay, the sheer breadth and depth of what *2K12* offers will keep basketball fans happily playing for hundreds of hours. The only remaining challenge for the *NBA 2K* franchise may well be what they can come up with to improve the game next year. 'Cause we can't think of anything.

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
10

ROGER BURCHILL

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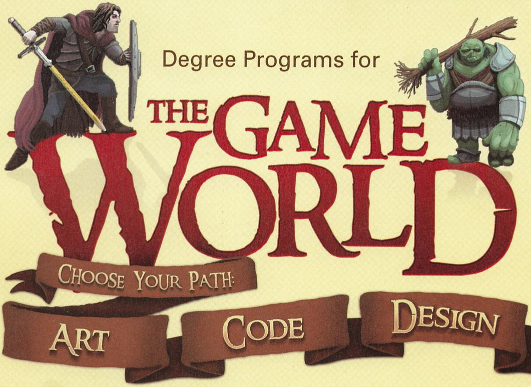

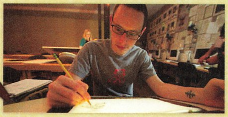

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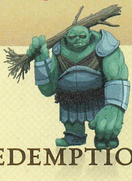

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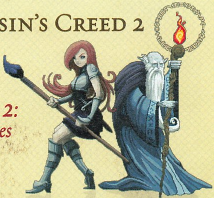

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GOLD AWARD
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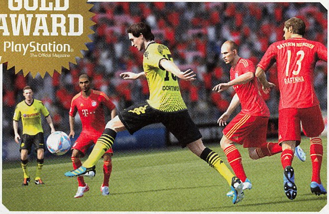
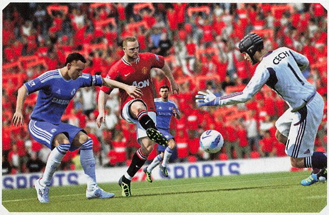


Whether you call it football or soccer, at least we can all agree that everyone feels snazzier wearing a proper kit.



FIFA Soccer 12

Kicking it around

FIFA SOCCER 12

Info
Format PS3
Pub EA Sports **Dev** EA Canada
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like the champion has improved on every front.

We have to wonder, year on year, what EA Sports can do to enhance it's global *FIFA* powerhouse. For this year, the defensive positioning has received an overhaul, which makes sense since in past iterations it was all too easy to turn over defenders to the A.I. and let them make better decisions than we might. What's more impressive here is how the attacking A.I. then responds to our defensive jockeying position: it takes its time, seeming to respect our zone coverage.

Sure, defense isn't the sexiest feature, but it's so crucial to the overall game that these improvements ramp up the simulation significantly. Blended with the way players bump off each other, it adds another level to the way the beautiful game plays out.

Given that the on-field action looks and plays so well (no surprise), most players will want to dive into the longer-term options. The ability to get behind a favorite team is a clever addition, and the career mode follows real-world storylines.

Back on the pitch, the option to choose commentary partners helps manage our own experience. The addition of little comments that make it feel like our game is the center of the universe really helps us feel invested.

With great visuals, fully featured commentary, and a depth of content that will absolutely keep *FIFA* fans engaged, this 2012 iteration will easily satisfy the crowd.

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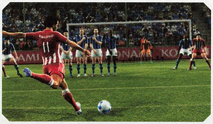
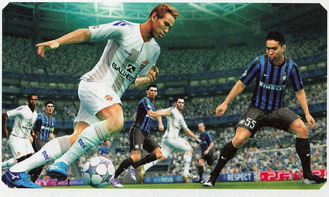
ALEX JOHNSON





Pro Evolution Soccer 2012

Evolution indeed

Not content with merely conquering America's version of football, EA Sports has dug its cleats deep into "the world's most popular sport" with their increasingly dominant *FIFA* franchise. Unlike their annual, uncontested *Madden* release, however, their soccer series may finally see some competition from Konami's long-running *Pro Evolution Soccer*.

Where *PES 2011* was marked by some welcome changes and significant improvements, this year's entry seems more concerned with tweaking and balancing the existing formula rather than drastically overhauling it. While comparatively subtle to *2011's* makeover, the new coat of polish is still quite noticeable.

First and foremost, controlling players is a much smoother, more satisfying experience. The responsive dribbling is so rewarding, in fact, we found ourselves hogging the ball even when passing was the best strategic option. More obvious additions—like the ability to direct players with R3 during throw-ins and free kicks—further complement the tighter controls.

While skillfully evading defenders on the way to an epic goal provides plenty of immersion-amping thrills, some flaws—such as spotty teammate and opponent A.I.—occasionally keep the fun in check. Additionally, *PES 2012* puts on a damn impressive visual show but still lacks the slick presentational polish of its competition. It may not be quite ready to steal the crown from *FIFA*, but *PES's* continued dedication to improving itself makes it well deserving of a spot on the pitch.

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MATT CABRAL

Info

PES2012
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

Format PS3
Pub Konami
Dev Winning Eleven Productions
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like the best *PES* yet, though it still can't beat out the competition.

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Intense Violence
Strong Language

PlayStation 3

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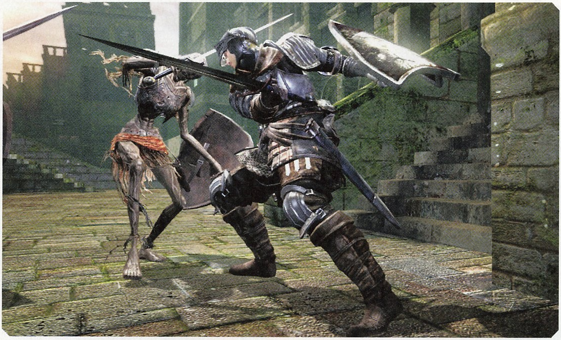
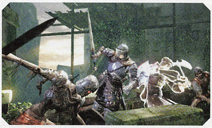


Dark Souls is by no means an easy game, but persistence often yields success. Or tears.



We can now perform running jumps to bridge small gaps or use powerful plunging attacks from above.

Dark Souls

Japanese for hardcore

Beaten and bruised, we stood before a blinding doorway—the only source of light in an otherwise dark forest. The fanged, four-legged creature that awaited us on the other side had killed us many times before, but we were determined to succeed. We entered the light and stepped into a clearing populated by gravestones and the swords of fallen champions.

That's when we heard the demon's howl. With our shield raised, we engaged the monster. It swung at us with a sword twice the size of any human being. We dodged. Attacked. Dodged. One misstep would mean instant death. Again. After 18 intense minutes of trading blows, the fiend made a fatal mistake. Injured, it overextended with a desperate swing. We seized the opportunity and plunged our sword into its throat. Palms sweaty, heart pounding, we put down the controller and reveled in our hard-earned victory. This, in essence, is *Dark Souls*.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Namco Bandai
Dev From Software
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like an adrenaline rush that lasts for 50 hours straight.

Survival Tips

MELEE

Strafe
Strafing a counter-clockwise circle around enemies usually makes dodging incoming attacks simple, especially for melee-based monsters. Don't be afraid to get close—just keep that shield up.

RANGED

Snipe
A longbow can be found in the Dark Forest area leading to the Valley of Drakes. Grab it and stock up on arrows from the undead merchant, and pick off powerful enemies from a distance.

Developer From Software promised unmatched difficulty in its spiritual successor to *Demon's Souls*—a fantasy action RPG lauded for its extreme challenge—and it succeeded in spades. Every environment is threatening. Every enemy is deadly. Where most RPGs would have us effortlessly cut a path through hordes of monsters, *Dark Souls* requires patience and observation. Discovering how to handle each foe is half the battle, as most of the game's creatures could quickly end us with a strike or two. Consequently, every enemy encounter is a nerve-racking fight to the death. Of course, leveling up and acquiring stronger equipment and more potent magic makes each zone a bit easier, but victory is never a guarantee—it's a privilege to be experienced only by those willing to press on.

Yet there were times we felt From Software made some design choices for the sake of adding unnecessary difficulty to already challenging situations. We appreciated many of the game's brilliant battles, but cringed when we had to fight powerful monsters on frustratingly narrow ledges. We loved the game's singular, cohesive world (which replaced *Demon's Souls* Nexus and fractured sub-worlds) but sighed when we had to backtrack through lengthy chunks of it—and its enemies—to restock our arrow supply. Instead of mana, a counter limited the number of times we could use each spell. This severely limits some playstyles, as those who favor casters will often be forced to engage in melee combat once they've used up all their magic. Spells can only be refreshed by resting at bonfires, and while using these checkpoints replenishes health and potions, it also respawns enemies.

Thankfully, we didn't always have to face danger alone. As in *Demon's Souls*, we can leave warning messages for fellow adventurers or summon them to our world to assist with challenging encounters. Alternatively, we can invade other games and slay unsuspecting victims for sport. The opportunity for players to indirectly help (or hinder) one another creates an intoxicating us-against-the-world multiplayer experience that can't be found anywhere else. Did this stop us from dying a billion times? No. But our perseverance was rewarded with an overwhelming sense of accomplishment, making *Dark Souls* one of the most engrossing RPGs we've ever played. **RYAN TALJONICK**

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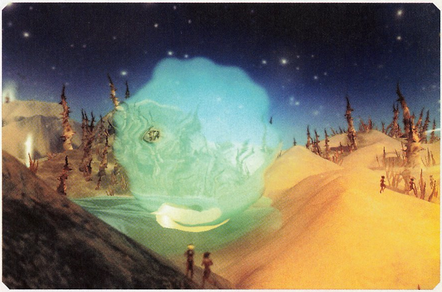
From Dust

Who says we can't move mountains?



Info

Format PSN
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft
Price $14.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like shaping the world for our amusement.

It's not easy being a god, and *From Dust* drops us right in the middle of the problems faced by a deity. In each level, prospective gods need to lead followers through beautiful yet dangerous environments, manipulating the elements to lead the puny mortals to three totems and, finally, an exit.

Toying with the elements works great for the most part. As soon as we got the hang of how the elements interacted with each other (water turns lava to stone, lava melts away dirt), puzzling out the levels felt free flowing and fun. The early levels allowed us to experiment and discover within the gorgeous world. Unfortunately, the longer, more difficult levels can only be solved through extensive trial and error. The imprecision that comes with dropping fluid clumps of earth, water, and fire led to some frustration, and occasional bad villager pathfinding didn't help matters either.

These issues can be forgiven, however, due to the sense of satisfaction earned by saving helpless villagers from an oncoming tsunami or volcanic eruption. *From Dust* takes the god game to a slightly flawed but intriguing place. TAYLOR COCKE

PlayStation 8

Dead Rising 2 Off the Record

Format **PS3** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom Vancouver**
Price **$39.99** ESRB **Mature**

The director's cut-like *Dead Rising 2: Off the Record* once again pits us against Fortune City's infected, only now original hero Frank West subs for Chuck Greene. We tread much the same path Chuck did, but there are some gameplay-improving tweaks (faster load times, better-placed checkpoints) and fresh content. The new Uranus Zone is a sort of adult-aimed Tomorrowland and Sandbox mode removes the time and story restraints from the creative carnage. *Record* is very familiar, but undeniably fun. MATT CABRAL

PlayStation 7

Burnout Crash

Format **PSN** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Criterion Games**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Burnout Crash is an arcadey take on the *Burnout* series' renowned Crash mode infused with a very distinct pinball feel. By using the Crashbreaker meter, we could launch our vehicle around the map with damaging explosions, creating high-scoring chain reactions. Yet blocking an intersection with broken-down autos enabled us to score points by doing nothing at all. A few game modes and a neat Autolog feature that allows us to challenge friends to score-based competitions keep things interesting for a while, but *Crash* gets quite stale after a few spins around the block. RYAN TALJONICK

PlayStation 6

Splinter Cell Trilogy

Format **PS3** Pub/Dev **Ubisoft** Price **$39.99** ESRB **T-M**

Despite their past success, *Splinter Cell*, *Pandora Tomorrow*, and *Chaos Theory* make for a less than impressive HD package. The original game struggles most, with lackluster character models, a stuttering framerate, and dated gameplay. *Pandora Tomorrow* fares only slightly better, though *Chaos Theory* feels almost like a modern game thanks to the HD improvements. But *Trilogy* unforgivably rips out the multiplayer components entirely. These modes deserved to be expanded, not stealthily assassinated. HOLLANDER COOPER

PlayStation 6

SAVE HUMANITY

MATURE 17+ ™

M

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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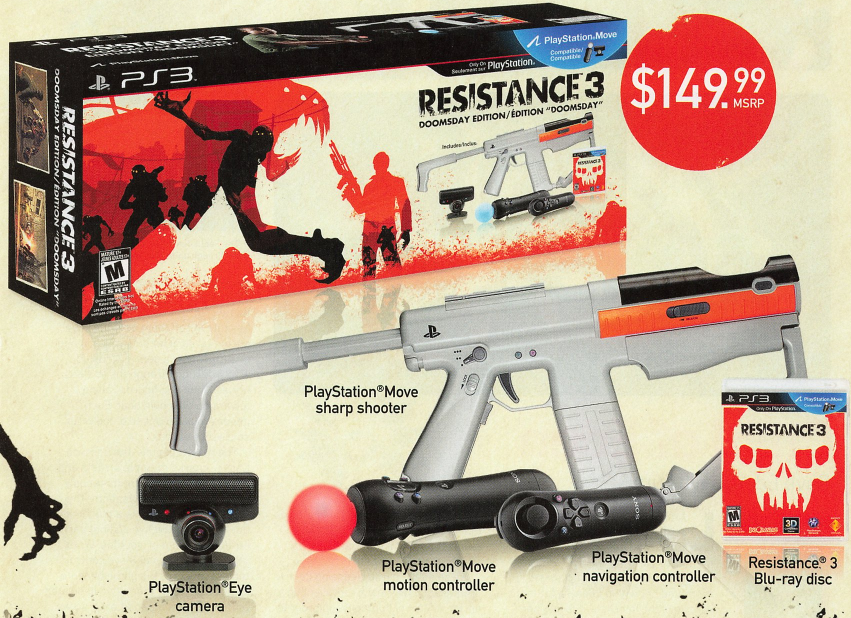
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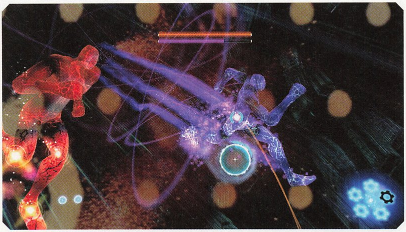
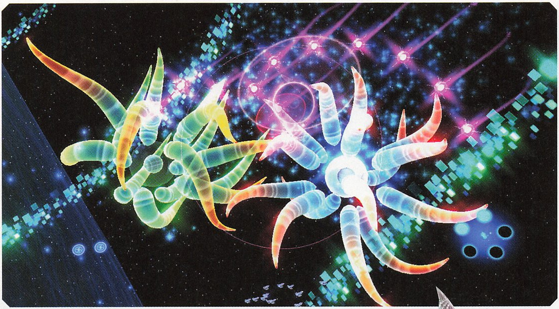


Visual effects are unlocked as players complete the game on various difficulties, creating an even richer, more beautiful affair.



The Feel Eden mode allows players to simply glide through unlocked levels.

Child of Eden

Save Eden, save Lumi

Info

Format PS3
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Q Ent.
Price $39.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like everything you see after the dentist administers the feel-good medicine.

Lumi, the first human born in space, spent her life dreaming of Earth, and after her death, her memories were stored in an archive. Using Lumi's memories, scientists recreated her within Eden—a futuristic version of the Internet—dubbing her rebirth "Project Lumi." However, they never bothered to set up a firewall, so corruption quickly spread throughout Eden, tainting everything it touched.

The result? An experience so far from a standard shooter we feel strange referring to it as such. *Eden* is presented as a rescue mission in the form of a rail shooter, but story and gameplay often take a backseat to the stunning mix of electronic music and artistic visuals. Playing through *Child of Eden*, we directly influence the music by striking enemies in varying patterns that produce different sounds, which rewards us with a musical score no other player will be able to recreate.

We spent the game cleansing the five archives of Eden—each representing a different facet of humanity—in order to save Lumi from the virus. As we cleansed, we earned stars that enabled us to proceed through Eden, though some sections required multiple playthroughs to earn enough stars to unlock the next archive. Fortunately, rewards like unlockable concept art provided an incentive to keep replaying a level, and no two playthroughs were ever totally alike.

Along with its dynamic soundtrack and breathtaking environments, *Eden* boasts out-of-this-world creatures and bosses (we hesitate to call them enemies). We encountered giant butterflies in need of purification, a gem-encrusted whale drifting through the endless horizon, and two figures racing toward an unknown goal. Each needed to be cleansed of the virus, so cleanse we did.

The main weapon—the Lock-on Laser—marks multiple targets and fires at all of them simultaneously, while the secondary weapon—the Tracer—acts more like a machine gun but is chiefly effective against particular enemies and projectiles. When utilizing the optional Move controls, many aspects of the game became easier. That said, there's no dedicated button for the Lock-on Laser, so we had to flick our wrists sharply in order to fire it. After several hours of gameplay, this lead to quite a bit of wrist stress and left us cursing our carpal tunnel.

The gameplay in *Child of Eden* is simple, but its relative lack of complexity is easily outweighed by its fervent dedication to turning each player's experience into an inimitable work of art.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
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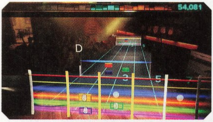
ANNE LEWIS

Rocksmith

Format **PS3** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft San Francisco** Price **$79.99 (includes cable)** ESRB **Teen**



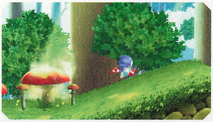
We'll say this much: The technology driving *Rocksmith* is awesome. Take any real guitar, use a special cable to plug it directly into a PS3, and presto, instant game controller. Unfortunately, the software just doesn't compare. The painfully stale "hit scrolling notes in time with a song" gameplay feels awkward because the game positions its camera directly *behind* a virtual guitar neck, which makes reading chord formations counterintuitive. The instructional tools don't surpass materials available free online, the song list is hit and miss, and the automatically scaling difficulty, though interesting, takes far too long to progress. For beginners only.

PlayStation **6**

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Sonic Generations

Format **PS3** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sonic Team** Price **$49.99** ESRB **Everyone**



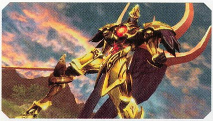
Thrown into an alternate reality filled with adversaries and locations from their past, 2D and 3D Sonic must rescue their compatriots and fix a hole in time that was created when their worlds collided. Classic Sonic handles like fans might expect: fast-paced platforming with a pleasantly nostalgic feel (we loved revisiting locations like the Green Hill Zone). 3D Sonic has improved upon past controls with the use of a homing attack that lets him target enemies, as well as the launch pads that allow for more fluid gameplay. Old meets new in *Sonic Generations* and leaves a pleasant taste in our mouths as we bite into Sonic's 20th birthday cake.

PlayStation **8**

ANNE LEWIS

White Knight Chronicles II

Format **PS3** Pub **D3Publisher** Dev **Level-5** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Teen**

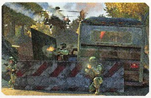


Want to hack or possibly slash things? *White Knight Chronicles II* will set you up. An improved semi-real-time combat system packs greater tactical depth, and there's a fair hoard of loot to suck down on the way to the level cap. Be advised that hacking soon becomes an end in itself, though: The single-player story is cheesy fantasy schlock, and while the online mode has an array of decently designed multiplayer quests, it could stand some more structured goals and a stronger emphasis on cooperation. Dedicated slash-hackers will be too busy grinding levels to care, but let's hope Level-5 someday builds this idea into something more of us can get into.

PlayStation **7**

DAVID F. SMITH

DLC Roundup



Homefront The Rock Map Pack

Price **$4.99** ESRB **Mature**

With America in virtual shambles, we're ready to take the power back. This map pack dishes out two new multiplayer maps (Alcatraz and Bridge) and two new Team Deathmatch locations (Waterway and Overpass). It's time to spill the blood of our oppressors across the streets of San Francisco.

Worms 2 Armageddon Retro Pack

Price **$4.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

A retro blast from the wormy past, this pack features 20 different missions from the original *Worms: Armageddon* that have been tweaked and updated. Each map can be played solo or in multiplayer to unlock sweet goodies like new hats, speech banks, and a landscape theme.

Download of the Month

Battlefield Bad Company 2

Add-On Bundle Price **$29.99** ESRB **Mature**

Anyone who's been holding off on nabbing the glut of available *Bad Company 2* DLC can now get the whole shebang in one big explosion of awesomeness. This pack includes the highly touted, up-close-and-personal action of the Vietnam expansion, all of the VIP packs, new vehicles, extra weapons, bonus maps, and more. That's a disgusting amount of combat gear to take into battle.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two, everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
®
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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Captain America

Marvel comes out on top

Info

Price $54.99
Creators Joe Johnston, Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely
Starring Chris Evans, Hugo Weaving, Tommy Lee Jones, Hayley Atwell
Rated PG-13
Extras Documentaries, deleted scenes, *The Avengers* movie hype.

Summer of 2011 will go down as the summer of Marvel. Three exceptional superhero blockbusters—each better than the last—graced screens this year. As good as *Thor* and *X-Men: First Class* are, *Captain America* is the best of the bunch. The first big-budget theatrical outing for Marvel's Boy Scout is a movie that works on a surprising number of levels.

The movie is a superhero origin tale. It has plenty of familiar four-color action and even a bit of hokiness now and then. Director Joe Johnston took an excellent script that isn't afraid to poke fun at itself and turned it into a superpowered WWII epic. It's because *Captain America* is largely a 1940's period piece that the movie works so well. Much like *First Class*, placing the story in the past immediately jacks up the interest level and appeal.

Taking on the serious nature of war lends gravity to the fantastical villainy of Red Skull and the bulletproof morality of Steve Rogers. Nazis are rarely mentioned or shown, but Hugo Weaving is menacingly self-serving and maniacal as Red Skull, the leader of the power-hungry militant group HYDRA. He's comic-book evil without the awful clichés that usually accompanies such roles. More surprising is Chris Evans as Rogers. A far cry from his usual wiseass performances, Evans manages to bring an authentic sense of humanity and humility to Marvel's iconic character. Even when he's pulling out cheesy comic-book dialogue, he somehow never drops his sincerity for the role.

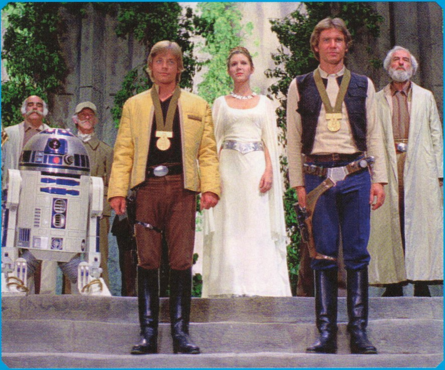
The wartime settings are intelligently used here as well, and the movie manages to throw in a lot of minor details from the long-running *Captain America* comic mythos.

Like most of this past year's summer blockbusters, *Captain America* is another 3D extravaganza. But the 3D is done very well here and mixes some obvious in-your-face shield flying effects with more subtle usage that adds depth to the picture. The overall picture quality is stunning in both the 2D and 3D versions.

Both the three-disc 3D and two-disc 2D Blu-ray sets come with the same extras. There's advanced hype for *The Avengers* movie, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and other Marvel-related goodies. This is a superhero movie worth collecting.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
9

JASON D'APRILE



Star Wars
The Complete Saga
The Force is still strong in this one

George Lucas can't stop playing with his junk. Just accept it. In the new Blu-ray collection, puppet Yoda has been replaced by a CG version in *Phantom Menace*. Darth Vader screams for no apparent reason in *Return of the Jedi*. Ewoks blink. Obi-Wan scares off Sand People with some new chant in *A New Hope*. Honestly, people, so what?

Star Wars, more than anything else, stands tall in cinematic history not because it's an epic masterpiece of storytelling, but because of the amazing technology and effects techniques it single-handedly created. Frankly (and as much as *Star Wars* fans will balk at this), these films are ripe with cliché, terrible acting, and bad scripts. Indeed, it's only *The Empire Strikes Back* and, at least partially, *Return of the Jedi* that actually stand apart as possibly good movies.

The new trilogy is a gorgeously shallow example of mad excess, proving Lucas is incapable of creating authentic human drama.

Yet even with all this venom towards the series, it's hard to deny that this boxed set is pretty damned awesome. The original series shows its age with a bit of graininess, but the level of detail allowed by Blu-ray makes every scene pop.

Beyond that, the sheer amount of extras in the collection is astounding. Lucas provides excellent commentary for every film. There are hours of documentaries that date from the late '70s to the present, specially made new archives, and deleted scenes. It's clear Lucas won't release the true original versions, and soon enough he'll be re-releasing this set in 3D—but until then, this is a prime example of a box set done right. JD

STAR WARS
THE COMPLETE SAGA

Info

Price $139.99 **Creator** George Lucas **Starring** Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Ewan McGregor, Hayden Christensen, Natalie Portman **Rated** PG/PG-13 **Extras** Commentary, documentaries, more.

PlayStation The Official Magazine 8

Blu-ray Roundup

The Nightmare Before Christmas 3D

Price $49.99 **Rated** PG

It's hard to believe that Tim Burton's macabre classic has been screwing kids up for almost two decades, but it sure looks gorgeous in hi-def 3D. The 3D conversion adds a palpable sense of depth to the beautifully bizarre visuals. 2D and DVD versions are also included. ⑧

Dead Cert

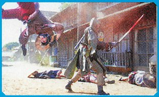
Price $24.98 **Rated** R

With a terrific concept of cockney gangsters versus vampires, this low-budget indie has a few bright spots. Unfortunately, it's so bogged down by sloth pacing and unnecessary exposition that the movie feels much longer than it actually is. The bloody climax is too little, too late. ⑤

Transformers
Dark Side of the Moon

Price $44.99 **Rated** PG-13

Fighting robots are cool, which is the only good thing about this brain-cell killing mess of horrid dialogue, stupefying plotting, and insipid characters. We can only hope Michael Bay stays true to his word and never touches this franchise again. ③



Higanjima
Escape from Vampire Island

Price $29.98 **Rated** TV-MA

A surprisingly watchable Japanese vampire movie, *Higanjima* mixes the usual bits of odd Asian humor and overacting with some terrific monsters. The high-schoolers-vs.-vampires story is fun, with bloody action and great sword fighting. ⑦

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Sony HMZ-T1 Headset

Want a home theater but don't have the space? This futuristic headset offers a 720p 3D image that's the functional equivalent of a 150-inch screen. It even has 5.1-surround sound.

$800

store.sony.com

Antec Soundscience Rockus 3D

Like your gaming audio loud and clear? The cylinder-shaped speakers, bolstered by a bumping subwoofer, pump out rich sound even at thunderously high volumes.

$200

antec.com

V-Moda M-80 Headphones

All angles and polished metal, M-80s are as tough as they look, with steel throughout, a suede headband, and comfy "ergosoft" memory foam earpads. The removable cables are Kevlar-reinforced and tangle proof.

$230

Propellerhead Balance

Getting quality audio in and out of a computer can be tricky, but this USB audio interface provides two-channel audio recording, auto clipping prevention, two XLR mic inputs, and a built-in headphone amp.

$500

propellerheads.se

LG Hom-Bot 2.0

This newest vacu-bot is the product of German engineering—think of it as Fahrvergnügen for the cat. It even interacts with an Android or iPhone app, which can be used to watch a live video feed from its built-in cam.

$TBA

lg.com

BBC Radio 6 Music
Track - Someone Like You
Artist - Adele
K2

Revo K2

The K2 can pull in audio from anywhere: FM, DAB/DAB+ broadcasts, Internet radio, Last.fm, as well as iOS devices or a computer library. It pumps out 40-watts of audio, and it's really purdy.

$488

revo.co.uk

This Is How I Play.

PlayStation®Move Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 The Masters Edition Bundle

Available Now

For a limited time,
ONLY
$99.99
MSRP*

PS3
Only On PlayStation
Seulement sur PlayStation
PlayStation Move
Compatible/Compatible
Additional 14 Championship courses included
Comprend 14 parcours de tournois supplémentaires
Masters
EA SPORTS
MASTERS
EVERYONE
ENFANTS et ADULTES
E
CONTENT RATED BY
CONTENU ÉVALUÉ PAR
ESRB
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB
Les échanges en ligne ne sont pas classés par l'ESRB
TIGER WOODS
PGA TOUR 12
PlayStation Network
SELECT
SONY

Bundle includes:

- PlayStation®Move motion controller
- PlayStation®Eye camera
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters Blu-ray disc

EVERYONE ™
E
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*MSRP Manufacturers Suggested Retail Price.

PS3™
PlayStation 3
PlayStation Move

SONY
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PS3 | PSP | PSVITA
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
Issue 050 October 2011
Deus Ex
Battlefield 3
SoulCalibur V
Assassin's Creed
Journey
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
BATMAN
SECRETS OF ARKHAM CITY REVEALED
10 ALL-TIME GREATS
PSone Classics worth replaying
BIOSHOCK INFINITE
DISHONORED
THE WITNESS

OMG is that guy wearing lipstick? He's totally wearing lipstick. LOL!

A sad goodbye, suspect paternity claims, and our insistence that games mags are not porn.

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Land of the Rising Fun

Issue 49 of PTOM could not have arrived at a better time. I was just two days away from a three-week vacation to Japan when it showed up at my door, so the article "Eat, Drink, Play Tokyo" was a most welcome surprise. While I was in Tokyo, I made sure to try and find Famicom City and the EA Shooting Bar featured in your article. First up was Famicom City, and although my friend and I were able to find its location, I'm afraid to report that it is now closed. Some friendly folks on the next floor up gave us the sad news. So it was off to the EA Shooting Bar, which I'm very happy to report was definitely open! My friend and I had some drinks and fired off a few rounds at some targets. I highly recommend the three-layered "Samurai Edge" cocktail named after the S.T.A.R.S. custom handgun. Thanks for helping to make one of the highlights on my trip to Japan!

MATT SPONSLER THE INTERNET

Videogame tourism, Matt. It's the wave of the future, and you're surfin' the crest. We're just glad we could help. Did you bring us back anything nice?

The Long Goodbye

It was a hell of a year being with you, Gary, and you have done everything a man can do for a magazine. So I'm guessing you're going to be working for a new GamesRadar magazine? Who knows, maybe someday we'll start a digital magazine on the PS Store. Then you'll have no choice but to come back to us, just like Kevin Butler did with PlayStation Headquarters. **RAFAEL** THE INTERNET

GamesRadar magazine, eh? Not that we know of. Gary's heading up the one and only GamesRadar.com, the official website of the Internet. Of course, that's only one floor up from us, so don't get too teary-eyed. Gary will still pop up here and there—like maybe on our PTOM Theater YouTube series. As for your idea to make a digital magazine for the PS Store: Can we interest you in a little product called Qore?

Forever Alone: The Saga

Ok, I have to admit, that pic of Veronica Belmont is HOT! [Mail, Issue 50] The fact that she is pointing at me with that cute little sneer and that angry look in her eyes—I don't care what she calls me! Could you send me an HD digital copy of that pic? I would appreciate it.

JAMES BARABOO WI

HEY, STOP MISSING THE POINT! YOU'RE DOING THAT ON PURPOSE!

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

I agree with Adrock's letter in Issue 50, "Forever Alone, Part 2." This is a great magazine and my parents approve, but what would make this magazine MUCH, MUCH better is some ladies. I'm sayin' like it wouldn't kill you to put maybe four pages of girls for us guys to look at. I'm 12 so I can't get my hands on those dirty magazines, but if you put dirty pics of girls in this, my parents would never expect it. All I'm asking here is for some pics for us guys. I will be expecting it in the next issue.
P.S. I don't want like Princess Leah or something stupid like that please.
SEBASTIAN THE INTERNET

We are so calling your parents.

Ten Best Complaints

Loved the "10 Best PSone Classics" article. Please publish more "10 Best" lists for multiple categories from all the PS platforms, e.g. "10 Best Shooters," "10 Best RPGs," etc. Thanks for the great read.
JOE CONNOR PENNSVILLE, NJ

Aww, gee thanks, Joe. We're happy tha—

So let me get this straight: According to PTOM, the list of "10 Best PSone Classics" does NOT include *Wipeout*, *Tekken 2*, or *Resident Evil*?! To not include even one of these games is a crime. These three games inarguably helped make the PS what it is today, with multiple iterations that continue to deliver on today's console. Am I the only reader that's never even heard of *Xenogears* or *Suikoden*?
TRUESON TARINELLI CONNECTICUT

Take it easy, Trueson! No need to interrupt. You're right—all three of those titles are enduring classics that played an important role in the development of the platform. But the same could be said of Final Fantasy VII, Crash Bandicoot, *and any number of other games. Point is, we spent a ton of time debating what should go on that list, and there were plenty of worthy titles that, regrettably, didn't make the cut. As for* Suikoden *and* Xenogears*? Well...*

Just wanted to say thanks for including *Xenogears* in your Top 10 PSone games! I've played it through twice, putting well over 100 hours in each time, maxing out the game clock. One thing I continue to appreciate about PTOM is that you don't forget the older gems because of the new ones. Keep it up!
JOHN CIMBARO LAKE WORTH, FL

PlayStation
Xenogears
SQUARESOFT

Mel Capelli

Funny thing I noticed on the cover of the September 2011 issue with *Resistance 3's* Joseph Capelli brandishing a pretty badass assault rifle: There was an awfully strong resemblance to Mel Gibson in his *Mad Max* and *Road Warrior* days. Is this coincidence?
MICHAEL KITSAP SUBMARINE BASE, WA

Dude, we totally thought the exact same thing! We even made a joke about it in last month's Mail section, but the line was cut before the issue went to print. We doubt the resemblance was intentional, though—Joe isn't nearly crazy enough to be related to Mel.

Style-ish

Bonjour, PTOM! I finished reading your August 2011 issue recently and noticed that you used the term "Victorian" in your excellent *Rayman Origins* preview to describe a 16th century mansion in Southern France. Keep in mind that Victorian is a time period specific to England and not a style. Most of the time when people say "Victorian" they mean "Gothic Revival," which was not at all exclusive to Victorian England. It's kind of like how in England they took the Pan-European neoclassical style and started calling it Georgian (after their king, George). It's a common mistake, so don't be sad PTOM. Cheers!
ROBERT PINELLO PARTS KNOWN, FL

Oh right, of course, Pan European neoclassical something something. We totally knew that, but good catch!

Ask Ryan

Q **Ryan's *Dark Souls* review has me wondering when a reviewer is going to take From Software to task for making ridiculously difficult games with no option for gamers who like to play their games on a lower difficulty level.**
JAMES MULLINS THE INTERNET

A Well, that piece was a preview, not a review. But I didn't "take From Software to task" because they're simply making the game they want to make. There's also no shame in simply skipping *Dark Souls*—if it's too much for you.

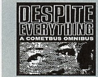
Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

MUSIC GAMES ROCK
RHYTHM GAMING'S GREATEST HITS OF ALL TIME
SCOTT STEINBERG

Music Games Rock

"I love being a fountain of useless knowledge, especially when it comes to videogames. This comprehensive compendium of music games by Scott Steinberg is a must read for gamers and trivia fanatics alike. To download a free PDF of the book, head over to musicgamesrock.com."
ROGER BURCHILL

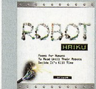


Despite Everything: A Cometbus Omnibus

"For more than 20 years now, Aaron Cometbus has channeled his tireless DIY ethic into a self-titled zine that documents the collective unconscious of punk rock culture at large. A must read for the young and disenfranchised."
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

The Lion King 3D

"When I saw 1994's *The Lion King* as an eight-year-old kid, I thought it was the greatest movie ever. Now, all these years later, seeing it again (this time in gorgeous 3D) has reminded me of two things: Scar is still a jerk, and I still love *The Lion King*."
RYAN TALJONICK



Robot Haiku

"I love my haiku,
To be about droids and 'bots,
This book is awesome."
ANNE LEWIS?

PS3
Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games

UNCHARTED 2
AMONG THIEVES

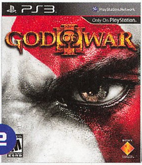
1

Action Adventure

Uncharted 2
Among Thieves

There's no way around it, Nathan Drake is the PS3's biggest star and *Uncharted 2* is his most impressive adventure yet, with breathtaking action and an incredible story. No excuses: Get it and play it!

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**



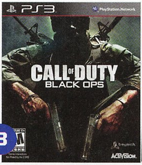
2

Action Adventure

God of War III

Huge beautiful battlegrounds and brutally gory fights with magnificent climaxes: we expected the world from the finale of Kratos' trilogy and we got it. A must-have for anyone with even the slightest amount of bloodlust.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Santa Monica Studio**



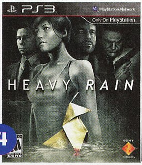
3

First-Person Shooter

Call of Duty
Black Ops

Black Ops improves on *Modern Warfare's* already awesome FPS formula. The franchise is in top form with a brand new single-player story, the beloved zombie mode, and its top-notch online multiplayer.

10 Pub **Activision**
Dev **Treyarch**



4

Adventure

Heavy Rain

Innovative, intriguing, and immersive, *Heavy Rain* is one of the most original titles in years. The mystery of the Origami Killer will keep you guessing until it's solved... or until the heroes die in the process.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Quantic Dream**

ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS
RED DEAD REDEMPTION

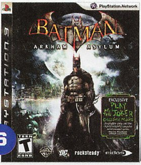
5

Open-World Shooter

Red Dead Redemption

Continuing with its record of amazing titles, Rockstar's latest open-world game combines a drop-dead gorgeous Old West with a mesmerizing story and fabulous characters.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar SD/North**



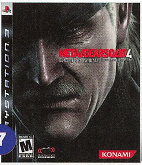
6

Action Adventure

Batman
Arkham Asylum

Finally, the Caped Crusader gets the current-gen game he deserves. Use a plethora of bat-gadgets and bat-moves to take back the Joker-controlled Arkham Asylum and love every second of it.

10 Pub **Eidos/Warner Bros.**
Dev **Rocksteady**



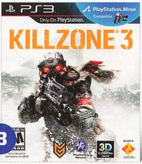
7

Stealth Action

Metal Gear Solid 4

Hideo Kojima's masterpiece might be criticized for its lengthy cutscenes and convoluted storyline, but that shouldn't stop anyone from experiencing one of the most important games on any platform today.

10 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**



8

First-Person Shooter

Killzone 3

War isn't pretty—unless you're playing *Killzone 3*. But the latest clash between the ISA and Helghast ventures beyond great graphics with improvements to combat, storyline, and multiplayer that propel it to the FPS genre's top ranks.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Guerrilla Games**

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

9

Fighter

Super Street Fighter IV

An update to the best fighting game from the most well-respected series in gaming history makes for a can't-miss title. Kicking heads and nostalgia combine to form one perfect package.

10 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**

ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS
L.A. NOIRE

10

Adventure

L.A. Noire

Rockstar blazes new gameplay trails again with its MotionScan technology that captures and animates facial expressions. Players must "read" people while investigating crimes in a vividly recreated 1940s Los Angeles.

9 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Team Bondi**

LONG LIVE PLAY.

See what Kevin Butler has to say at
https://www.facebook.com/PlayStation

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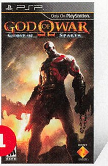
SONY
make.believe

PSP
Essential collection

PlayStation's 10 best handheld games. Whether on the road or on the couch, just play them.



1

Action Adventure

God of War
Ghost of Sparta

Kratos is back with, what else, a vengeance. *Ghost of Sparta* is the newest addition to the franchise and, trust us, there will be blood in this poignant adventure, with one of the best endings in the entire series.

10
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Ready At Dawn**

2

Action Adventure

God of War
Chains of Olympus

We just had to put both of them on our list. The huge boss fights and memorable puzzles are not lost on the PSP in this larger-than-life series. A must-own for any *God of War* fan.

10
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Ready At Dawn**

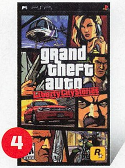
3

Platformer

LittleBigPlanet

Aside from being one of the most adorable games ever, *LittleBigPlanet* is also a fully interactive, fully customizable, fully awesome puzzle platformer. This game deserves our full-fledged creative attention.

10
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE Cambridge**



4

Openworld Action

Grand Theft Auto
Liberty City

Some of us fondly remember the first *Grand Theft Auto*. Well, all the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll our parents warned us about is still alive and well and ready for consumption in this openworld PSP game.

10
Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

5

Puzzle Action

LocoRoco 2

LocoRoco 2 is a huge improvement on its already wonderful predecessor. Solve puzzles and work around the world to save the *LocoRoco*. It's impossible to feel down after hearing the game's infectiously happy soundtrack.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sony Japan Studio**

6

Action RPG

Crisis Core
Final Fantasy VII

A *Final Fantasy* fan's collection isn't complete without *Crisis Core*. With gorgeous cutscenes, familiar faces, and action-based role-playing, *Crisis Core* proves epic *does* fit in our hands.

9
Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**

7

Third-Person Shooter

Resistance
Retribution

Resistance: Retribution is a dark third-person shooter that fans of the series will love. Those worried that the series wouldn't transfer well to PSP need not fret one bit—save the fear for the Chimera.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Bend Studio**

8

Openworld Action

Grand Theft Auto
Chinatown Wars

Take to the streets of Chinatown with the best storyline we've ever experienced in a *GTA* game. The action has a top-down view, but there's no need to look down on this crime-game masterpiece.

9
Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

9

Stealth Action

Metal Gear Solid
Peace Walker

Set 10 years after *Snake Eater*, *Peace Walker* is required playing for *MGS* fans. Offering beautiful cutscenes and a wonderful squad recruitment system, it's almost too solid to be believed.

9
Pub **Konami**
Dev **Konami**

10

Role-Playing

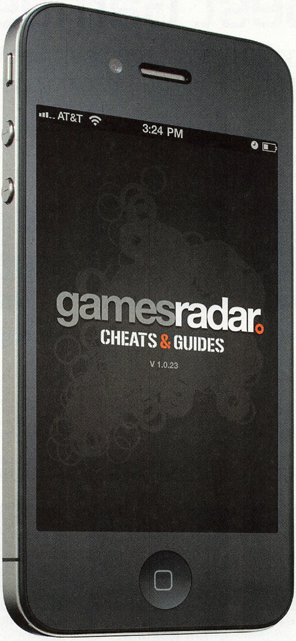
Persona 3
Portable

Fans of *Persona* or other Shin Megami Tensei games will know that any of these titles are bound to be good. This rather controversial RPG translates to the PSP flawlessly.

9
Pub **Atlus USA**
Dev **Atlus**

“★★★★★” Amazing app, and it's FREE!

by Vitsnuklz



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PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

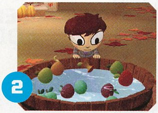
1

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often but never feel frustrated about it.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**



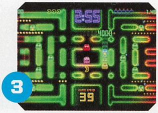
2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



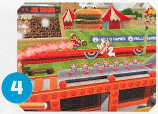
3

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9 Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**



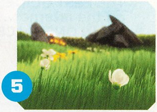
4

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**



5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

6

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien and rock blasting galore, ihe fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our mind and our reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

7

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

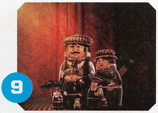
8

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**



9

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era–esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

NEW

10

Hardcore brawler

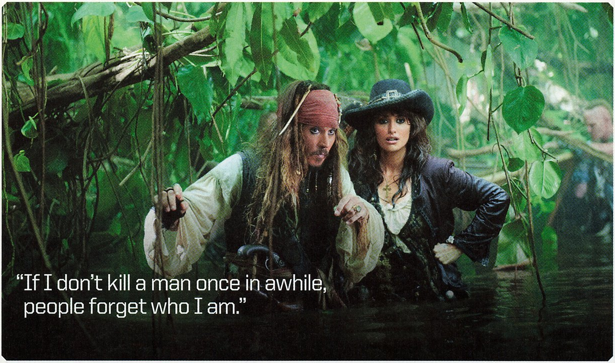
Street Fighter III Third Strike Online

This perfect port of the legendary 1997 arcade game features all new netcode that virtually eliminates lag. *Third Strike's* deep, demanding mechanics have earned it a diehard following. It deserves to be rediscovered and celebrated.

9 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom/Iron Galaxy**

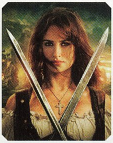
PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"If I don't kill a man once in awhile, people forget who I am."

Pirates of the Caribbean On Stranger Tides



ETA **Oct 18** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Action/Adventure** Studio **Walt Disney Pictures**

That whole "meet the parents" thing can be a terrifying ordeal—especially for Captain Jack Sparrow, considering his old flame's father is none other than the fearsome pirate Blackbeard. Sparrow may be a quick-witted, silver-tongued ladies man, but can he charm a ruthless killer? Probably about as well as we could survive the pirate's life (read: not very likely). Until we can command our very own pirate ship in our very own virtual pirate world, we're content watching Sparrow's hilarious adventure as he searches for the Fountain of Youth.

Check out Video Unlimited

Like apps? Like watching videos? Then we've got some good news: PS3 users can now explore great film and television content through the Video Unlimited preview application available in the Game Store. The new dynamic search function simplifies the process of searching and locating content, and the convenient interface allows for the discovery of new content that we may not have even known about. Simply find the application on the PlayStation Store and download it. Once it's been installed, the new Video Unlimited interface will appear under the video category in the XMB menu.

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Wild West Best

Red Dead Redemption Myths & Mavericks

Want more Wild West gunslinging? This DLC pack adds new characters and locations to different online competitive modes.

Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar San Diego**

2

Hellbound

Shadows of the Damned theme

One of this year's strangest games offers this ultra freaky nod to the heyday of '70s grindhouse horror. Infesting our PS3s with appropriately eerie backgrounds seems like a perfect way to show our love.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Grasshopper Manufacture**

3

No Limit Racing

MS Apocalypse Red Joker/Gold Joker

The high-speed quest for poker racing prize chips just got bigger. These two event packs feature new pimping rides and six single-player stages for more adrenaline-fueled burnthroughs.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Evolution Studios**

4

Visualize Swirled Peas

LittleBigPlanet 2 World Peace Day

World Peace Day may be over, but that's no reason to stop celebrating neighborly kindness and the not-killing of people around the globe. Don this cute and loveable Sackboy costume to show your love.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

5

Get Bombed

30 Minutes or Less static theme

While we wouldn't want to wake up with a bomb strapped to us, we don't mind strapping this wacky PS3 theme to our home console. Madcap movies filled with nutty comedic twists? Yes, please.

Pub **Columbia Pictures**
Dev **Ruben Fleischer**

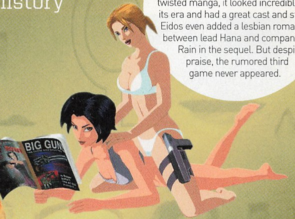
Forgotten Legends

Once memorable PlayStation characters lost to history

Hana

***Fear Effect* series**

Why this series isn't around any more is one of gaming's great mysteries. A beautiful, cel-shaded horror shooter that played like a dark, twisted manga, it looked incredible for its era and had a great cast and story. Eidos even added a lesbian romance between lead Hana and companion Rain in the sequel. But despite praise, the rumored third game never appeared.



Raziel

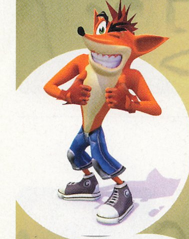
***Legacy of Kain* series**

Poor Raziel. He just peaked too soon—a vamp 10 years before *Twilight* and *True Blood* blew up. He's actually doubley dead as a vampire that was killed and then brought back from oblivion to off his former leader, Kain. Shame we'll probably never see him again as original dev Crystal Dynamics is busy with *Tomb Raider*, and creator and writer, Amy Hennig is now at Naughty Dog.

Torque

***The Suffering* series**

A sort of *Manhunt* meets *Silent Hill*, *The Suffering* saw Torque convicted of killing his family and shipped off to prison to be executed. Except the jail turns into a monster-filled hell-dimension with creatures mutilated according to their crimes or deaths. True, the series was never amazing, but the schlocky, bloody horror was unapologetic and entertaining in a 'shotgun head-explosion' kind of way.



Crash Bandicoot

***Crash Bandicoot* series**

Hard to believe this grinning marsupial was once PlayStation's biggest star. But way back in 1996, Crash was wowing gamers with his looks and amazing platforming action—spin attacking crates and hoovering up fruit like an addict. He's the classic fallen star, following a run of huge games with a kart racer and a slew of hopeful reinventions.

Sergeant Cortez

***TimeSplitters* series**

Hard to believe the people behind one of PS3's worst games, *Haze*, also created one of PlayStation's biggest icons. But before Free Radical choked, collapsed, and returned as Crytek UK, they were one of the premiere names in shooters. And Cortez, the time-traveling savior of mankind, was the star of the slickest, most satisfying PS2 FPSs ever made.

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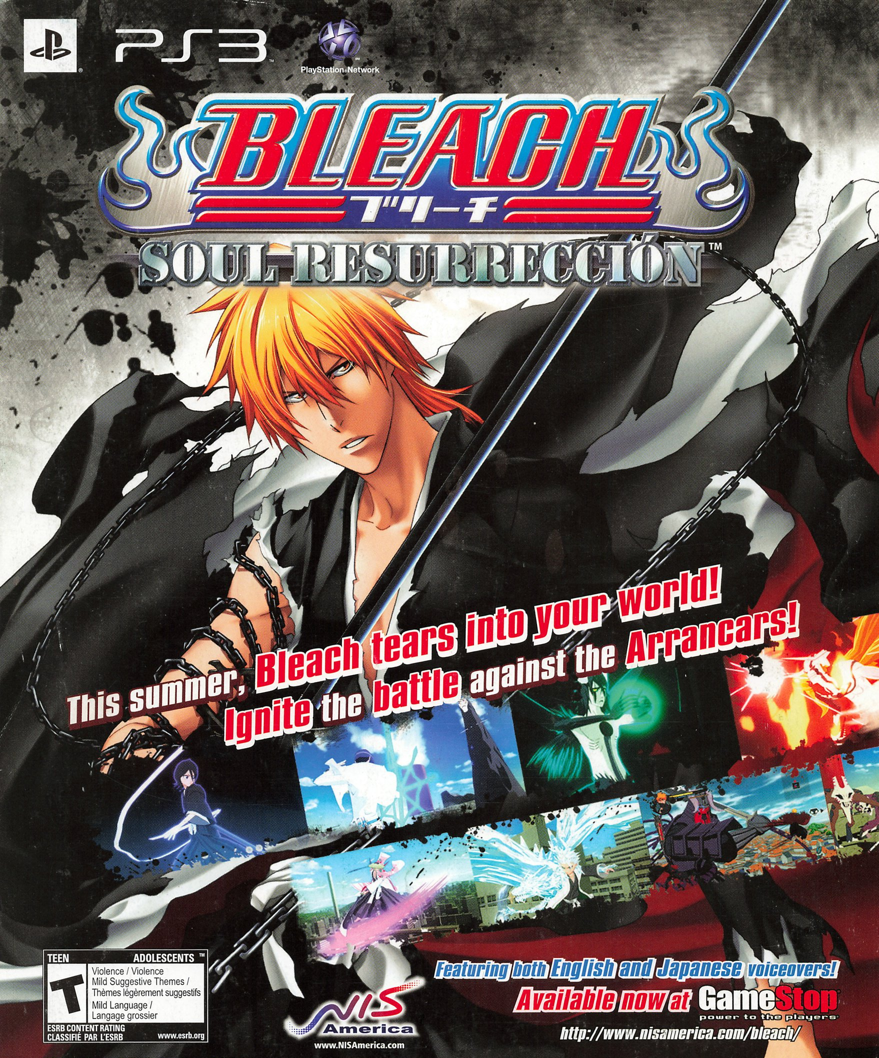

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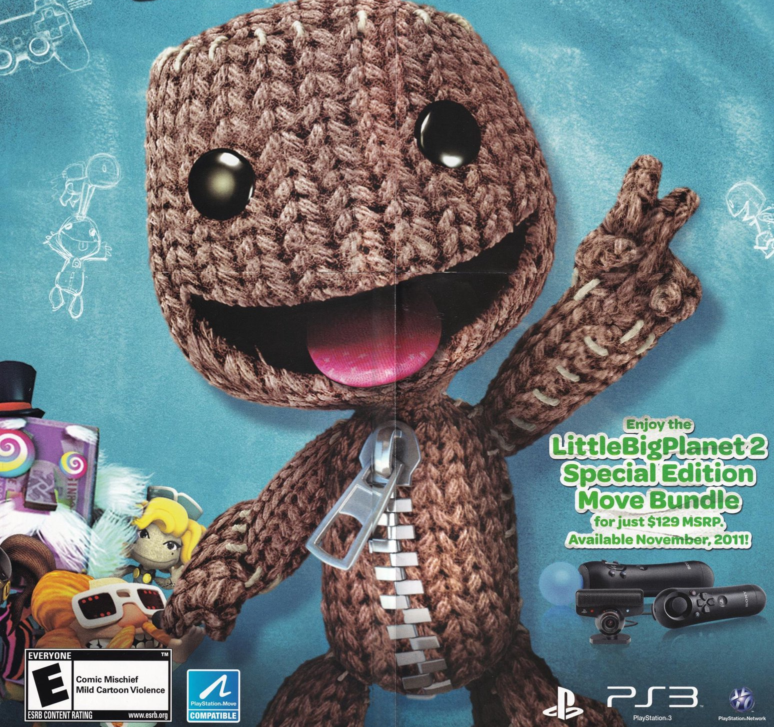

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